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General Mallock's Shadow

By

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GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

I

A DULL grey afternoon in March, heavy clouds driving low, cold wind sighing as it swept over the heather ; and not a glint of sunshine, not a sign of life, to relieve the widespread desolation of the Yorkshire moorland. For mile after mile the empty road rises, dips, curves, and there is no roof or chimney to cheer the eye, until on the high ledge of Redchurch Down one comes to the first outpost of civilization.

And this afternoon nothing very cheering in the gaunt, bare aspect of Long Moor House. It was like a block of drab stone, standing solitary and forlorn in the midst of the wilderness ; nothing pretty or home-like about it—windy lawns and unsheltered fields, stables and barns partially screened by meagre shrubbery and crouching trees, and all around these twenty enclosed acres the monotonous heath with its unbroken silence and unending sadness.

Inside, the house appeared to be comfortable enough —what the auctioneers describe as a moderate-sized compactly-built gentleman's residence : a fine large hall, with broad staircase ascending to upper gallery, suitable living-rooms, good accommodation for servants ; the whole conveniently arranged on two floors above ample cellarage. And General Mallock, the gentleman who resided there, had furnished it in a pleasant and appropriate style. Wherever one looked,

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there were evidences that the owner and his family possessed sufficient taste, refinement, and means.

Really a comfortable, friendly-looking house inside; but this afternoon the far-reaching sadness of the moor seemed to have crept indoors. One heard no sounds of bustling life, no voices, no laughter.

The two daughters of the house were sitting together in the morning-room—Mollie Mallock looking out of the window, and Kathleen Mallock looking into the fire—when the entrance of the butler disturbed a long silence.

"Here's the General's sword, Miss Kathleen, clanc and bright as a new pin. Oi've rubbed the rust off for another year. Will I take it to him?"

"No, put it down."

The butler had brought with him an old-fashioned leather sword-case, and he solemnly deposited it on a chair. He was a middle-aged Irishman, who told one at a glance that he was also a retired soldier.

"O'Kelly! What's father doing in there?"

Miss Mollie, the younger girl, had turned from the window, and was looking at the closed door of an inner room as she asked the question.

"He's fidgetin' about, miss," said O'Kelly gloomily.

"He hasn't been out since lunchcon?"

"No, miss. Oi troid to tempt um out into the fields to see how they're getting on with the toy rifle-range—but 'twas no good."

"Then don't disturb him," said Kathleen, the elder girl.

"I shall not, miss. For he's taking it more to heart than usual. This is the worst anniversary we've had, and I've seen fourteen of 'em." And O'Kelly, lingering, spoke more cheerfully. "Let's hope that Master Geoffrey will divert him. Master Geoffrey's a rare one to turn ye on the laugh."

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Geoffrey was the son of the house, now returning from his public school for the Easter holidays.

"Poor old Geoff!" said Kathleen, when the butler had left the room. "It's rough luck that he should come in for the dismal fag-end of our anniversary. Eton breaks up to-morrow. Why should Wellingborough choose the twentieth?"

"Oh, I think," said Mollie, "that it's quite proper for Geoffrey to take his share, and help us. He won't get much of it—only dinner and the evening."

The sisters offered a strong contrast, both in appearance and manner. Mollie was only eighteen, a plump and pretty little girl, brown-haired and bright-complexioned, with lips always craving to open in laughter, and eyes that lit up at the slightest provocation to innocently mischievous fun. She spoke childishly and babblingly, blurting out her thoughts the instant she became aware of them; and yet often unconsciously trying to imitate the self-possessed and sedate tone of her elder sister.

Kathleen, who was twenty-five, had the settled protective air of one long accustomed to bear the weight of family cares and responsibilities. She was tall and slim, with dark hair worn low on her forehead and pulled back in waving masses above the ears—the sort of girl who is not very noticeable at first, but who soon begins to arouse interest.

"Hark!" said Mollie. There was a sound of carriage wheels on the gravel drive, and she turned again to the window. "Who can it be? Oh, it's your new doctor—in the old doctor's phaeton. . . . Kathleen," she announced with animation, "he looks quite presentable—an immense improvement on Dr. Parrott."

"Yes, I think he's very clever. And he has much

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more tact. He seemed to understand father by instinct."

Then, before O'Kelly ushered the visitor into the room, Mollie with childish eagerness asked for instructions.

"Are you going to make a friend of him? Or are we to treat him just as a doctor and nothing else?"

"That depends on father. If father takes to him, I think it would be nice to have him for a friend. But, Mollie, you needn't gush at him, you know."

"All right."

Dr. Bryant, when presented at a closer view, showed himself to be a fairly good-looking, stiff-framed young man, with fair hair and fair moustache, and a strong and a clever face; but it struck Miss Mollie that he was unfortunately lacking in distinction, and that his clothes were of a plebeian, unattractive order.

"I got your note, Miss Mallock, suggesting that I should call."

"Yes, thank you for coming. . . . O'Kelly, ask father if he will see Dr. Bryant;" and Kathleen introduced the visitor to her sister.

"How do you do?" said Mollie, with shy volubility. "I'm very glad to see you. I hope Dr. Parrott is enjoying his retirement."

"Oh, yes, I think so."

"I am sure all his patients are enjoying it."

Dr. Bryant smiled.

"Wasn't he a favourite of yours?"

"Oh, no. So *dreadfully* dull and old-fashioned. We think we are very lucky in the change;" and Miss Mollie stopped short and blushed. Perhaps Kathleen might consider that this was gush.

Kathleen, however, was merely anxious to tell the medical adviser about his patient. General Mallock,

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she explained, had recovered from the cough for which Dr. Bryant recently attended him ; but during the last fortnight he had seemed excessively depressed, and altogether disinclined to the effort of exercise.

" So I thought you might give him a tonic—or advise anything else."

" You know," said Mollie, " my sister does everything for father."

" Yes," said Dr. Bryant, " I have already observed that."

O'Kelly, returning from the other room, requested the visitor " to step inside to um."

" Perhaps," said Kathleen in a confidential whisper, " you'd better not mention that I sent for you."

" Very good. I understand—a call of polite inquiry!"

" Stop a minnit," said the butler, in the same confidential tone that his young mistress had employed. " I mentioned to him that you'd summoned the doctor."

" Oh, well," said Kathleen, " never mind."

And Dr. Bryant, smiling good-humouredly, went into the other room.

Mollie had begun to laugh ; but she composed her face, and addressed the butler with a grotesque assumption of severity.

" O'Kelly, you are too painfully officious."

" I'm regretting if I've put me foot in it," said O'Kelly, with genuine contrition.

" You're always doing it. I shall ask Mr. Geoffrey to drill you."

" There, don't be hard on me, Miss Mollie. It's the fault of the day, not my fault ; " and he retired, grumbling his excuses. " With the best intentions, we can't none of us give satisfaction on the twentieth of March."

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The interview between doctor and patient was extremely brief. Almost immediately the door opened again; and General Mallock came out of his room, unceremoniously leaving the visitor to follow him.

"My dear fellow, I am very well—robustly vigorous. This good daughter weaves a web of mystery round me. . . . Nevertheless, I'm obliged to you for your kindness."

"I can see," said Dr. Bryant, rather disconcerted, "that there's nothing much the matter with you."

"Nothing's the matter with me—nothing whatever." As he spoke, General Mallock moved about the room restlessly and aimlessly. "It's uncommonly cold. Where's the wind? Still North-West? . . . Kathleen, you should keep a better fire . . . Mollie dear, fetch my cap and cloak. . . . Kathleen," and he pointed to the sword-case, left by O'Kelly on the chair, "that ought to be in its proper place—not here."

He spoke plaintively, almost querulously; and yet one soon detected that he was a man of great natural kindness and a most affectionate father. Dr. Bryant, watching him with professional attention, observed that he did not wait for any answers to his questions, and that there was at once a hurry and a hesitation in his movements.

"Where are you going, father?"

"My dear Kathleen, I don't know. . . . But, yes, I think I'll go out—for a stroll."

As he said it, he pulled himself together and became more erect. He was a tall thin man, white-haired and rather frail; but as soon as he ceased to stoop, he exhibited a soldierly bearing. And he had the true soldier's face, thoroughly typical, Dr. Bryant thought; high-bridged, hawklike nose, square, low forehead, iron-grey moustache, and well-modelled, well-set ears.

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There were many wrinkles round the unpronounced eyes—blue eyes, with a curious wistful expression now and then; but something dim of outlook, suggesting that there was no sufficient flash in them at any time.

"Thank you, dear."

Mollie had brought him his rough grey cloak, and Kathleen was helping him into it. He took the cap from her hand, and smiled at her while she wrapped a muffler round his neck. Then he turned to the visitor, with an old-world air of studied courtesy that seemed both dignified and gracious.

"You'll forgive me for bustling off like this? And once more accept my thanks for your kind thought."

But, as he moved to the door, Dr. Bryant again noticed the queer sign of indecision. He had said he was bustling off, yet now in a moment he paused irresolute.

"Where's O'Kelly? . . . Yes, yes. That's it, Kathleen, dear. I'll go to the meadow and play with my toy."

"His toy?" echoed Dr. Bryant, looking at the door when General Mallock had shut it behind him. "What does your father mean by that?"

"Only the miniature rifle-range. He and O'Kelly are making it—for the use of the servants."

"Oh, I see. Just so. . . . Well, now, Miss Mallock, I'll send your father a tonic, and you must persuade him to take it. But he wants something more than that. Obviously, he needs rousing, stimulating, cheering up."

"Cheering up?" said Kathleen blankly.

"We must wait till to-morrow," said her sister, "to try cheering treatment."

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"Why not begin at once?"

"Because," said Kathleen impressively, "to-day is the fifteenth anniversary of Andalkund."

"Oh, indeed?"

"Of course you know all about it?" And Kathleen Mallock looked at the doctor intently.

"Only vaguely—what the world knows."

"The world," said Kathleen quickly, "doesn't know the real facts;" and as she went on, a tone of bitter indignation sounded in her voice. "The Disaster of Andalkund! That's what they call it in all the books on India. There's not a book written during the last fourteen years—by soldiers or civilians—that hasn't some cruel and sneering words about it."

"I think," said Dr. Bryant thoughtfully, "that I begin to understand your father's nervous lassitude. Painful memories! An old story that he can't forget!"

Mollie had quietly brought the sword-case from the chair, and she glanced at her elder sister diffidently.

"Kathleen! Why not show him this?"

"Yes. Look at it, Dr. Bryant. This *is* father's story. The sword he carried then. . . . Read what he has written on the label."

Dr. Bryant, unbuckling the case, read the inscription on a card attached to the sword hilt. The owner of the sword had written with a somewhat shaky hand, "*This sword has lain rusting since 1897 because my sovereign and my country would not use it.*"

"Isn't that inexpressibly sad?" asked Kathleen Mallock.

Dr. Bryant scarcely knew what to say. "Well, yes," he murmured. "But—ah—experience tells us that in war there have always been lucky generals and

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er—unlucky generals. Your father therefore should not——”

But just then the butler came in.

“ Will I put that back to its place ? ” And he took the sword-case and marched with it into his master’s room.

“ You know,” said Miss Mollie, explanatorily and apologetically, “ O’Kelly was with father at Andalkund—as a sergeant. That’s why he is with us—as a butler. Of course, he must seem quite impossible to strangers.”

The attention of Dr. Bryant, however, was entirely concentrated on Miss Kathleen.

“ You spoke of the real facts,” he said gently. “ But the fact of the surrender of the fortress——”

“ It wasn’t a fortress,” said Kathleen quickly, almost hotly. “ It never was a fortress.”

“ No ? ”

Then, while she went on talking, Dr. Bryant watched her face and saw for the first time, with considerable surprise, that it was quite beautiful. The sudden animation had wrought an extraordinary change in her whole aspect. Colour glowed and faded in her pale cheeks ; the blue-grey eyes grew larger, darkened and flashed ; the small head was thrown back proudly and defiantly. The tone of her voice had deepened and strengthened.

“ No, certainly not. It was just an advanced post—a little town beyond the proper frontier—absolutely isolated—miles from help. . . . O’Kelly ! ” The butler had reappeared, and she addressed him energetically. “ O’Kelly, you can answer. Was Andalkund a real fortress ? ”

“ A fortres ? ” said O’Kelly contemptuously. “ About as much a fortres as this house, miss.”

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"And could father by any human power have defended it?"

O'Kelly answered the question with an odd sort of doggedness.

"He couldn't have done different. No man could have done different than the General did on that occasion."

"Quite so," said Dr. Bryant, gently and deprecatingly.

"When the tribes rose," Kathleen continued, "he was totally unprepared for hostilities. His own people were driven in—with the news that the whole country was occupied, far and near."

"Cutting us off," said O'Kelly.

"In a moment they were surrounded with overwhelming forces."

"Overwhelmung," said O'Kelly doggedly.

"And then, before they could look round, the rebel chief called on them to surrender—threatened death to every living soul—"

"And there were many women and children in the place," interposed Mollie.

"Father thought of the helpless women and children. No one can blame him for that. Besides, the rebel chief solemnly promised protection to troops and convoy when they marched out—and then, like a fiend, he broke his promise."

"Yes," said O'Kelly, "*that's* disgraceful, if you please."

"The retreat was horrible—it became a massacre;" and there was nothing but sadness in Kathleen's voice now. "Very few reached the British lines with father."

"What's the good of talking about it, miss?" said O'Kelly, in a tone of profound gloom; and he went out

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into the hall and piled more wood on the fire, as if he felt that the talk of Andalkund had made the house grow colder.

But Kathleen Mallock did not act on his hint and cease talking about it. Having started to tell the tale of bad luck, she seemed unable to stop until she could be sure that the visitor clearly understood there was nothing worse than bad luck in it.

Dr. Bryant said he quite understood. Listening politely and sympathetically, he admired her enthusiastic expression, and noticed how her voice vibrated to each swiftly changing emotion. Love of her father, pity for him, passionate and unshaken pride in him—each thought or feeling had its tremulous or full-toned vocal echo.

"Yet father was officially disgraced for it—when all his cruellest enemy could say was that he surrendered too soon."

"And then," interposed Mollie again, "he only surrendered in the end to save the women and the poor little children."

"Father claimed another command as simple justice. He has volunteered for every campaign—offered himself in any capacity. All that he wanted was another chance—and they wouldn't give him one. Don't you call that cruel and unjust?"

"Very severe."

"And now," said Kathleen, sadly finishing the tale, "he is too old. There's no chance of vindication now."

"Except the book," said Mollie. "The book will vindicate him."

General Mallock—as Kathleen explained,—suffering so much from unkind passages in other people's books, had lately determined to write a book of his own.

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He intended, with her assistance as secretary, to begin writing it at once ; he would enlighten the world as to the truth ; and then the world, ashamed of its ill-advised condemnation, would do him tardy justice.

"Don't you think it's a good idea ?"

"Well," said Dr. Bryant doubtfully, "the occupation of writing should be good for him—and I'm sure I hope that the volume will have the desired effect."

"It *will*," said Kathleen, firmly and confidently.

"Only—it occurred to me that, in painful matters of this kind, silence is sometimes the best policy."

"No, that is what we don't want—silence." Her head was raised proudly, and she flushed as she spoke. "That's the attitude of everyone we meet. Among the people who call themselves our friends, there's a conspiracy of silence. They won't speak of it, and we want it spoken of. We want it put right."

"We all feel it," said Mollie, "just as much as father does ;" and then she turned to her sister, with a childish thought bursting into eager words. "Kathleen, will he put the shadow in the book ?"

"No, of course not," said Kathleen hurriedly. "How silly you are !"

"The shadow ?" asked Dr. Bryant. "What's that ?"

"Oh, nothing," said Kathleen, showing a slight embarrassment ; and she again reproved her childish sister. "Mollie, you ought to keep things like that to yourself."

"I'm sorry."

Dr. Bryant looked from one to the other inquiringly. Then he said gravely to Kathleen, "Would you mind telling me ? I should like to know—if you don't mind."

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She hesitated for a moment.

"No, I don't mind in the least. It's really nothing at all. Only the way father spoke to *us*. . . . Father said that when he stood talking to the rebels' envoy the sun was just going down, and his shadow fell across the courtyard, stretching away—till it stretched right round the world and fell upon those he loved. . . . You know, father is fond of fables."

"Yes, but it was true," said Mollie, with unexpected resoluteness. "Mother died in the shadow. We live in the shadow."

Dr. Bryant suddenly displayed a purely professional cheeriness of manner.

"Ah, I see. A fanciful way of putting it—quite so. But, Miss Mallock, if I were you, I wouldn't encourage your father in such fancies. The fact is, all this brooding and so forth is bad for people. . . . I would say, get your father out and about. Amuse him. Find plenty of things for him to do. Let him peg away at his book, if he wishes; but in the intervals of labour, prevail on him to walk and ride—to get as much exercise as he can. . . . And, if you'll allow me, I'll look in again some time when I'm passing."

Then, as Dr. Bryant was on the point of taking leave, a footman came into the room with a tray of tea-cups.

"Won't Dr. Bryant stop to tea?" asked Miss Mollie.

Her sister feebly supported the invitation; and Dr. Bryant, perhaps rather unprofessionally, accepted it.

There was a blank pause. He had ceased to be a doctor, and had become an ordinary visitor. For a few minutes the necessity of making conversation

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called for a strenuous effort ; but Miss Mollie boldly plunged to the attack and prattled vivaciously.

" I'm going to York," she said, with great animation ; " to stay for quite a long time. I am so looking forward to it."

" You'll find York more entertaining than these barren moors."

" I shall find it too lovely for words," said Mollie enthusiastically. " There are to be dances. Are you fond of dancing, Dr. Bryant ? "

" No, I'm afraid dancing is not much in my line."

" Oh, what a pity. Can't you dance ? You know, you're not a bit too old to learn."

Mollie soon made the guest feel quite at his ease, and he thoroughly enjoyed the quiet friendly half-hour at General Mallock's tea-table.

The General himself, presently coming back from his toy rifle-range, was courteous and amiable.

" Very glad you didn't run away without a cup of tea. Sit down, my dear fellow—and pull your chair to the fire."

Before Dr. Bryant had finished his tea and cake another guest arrived. This was Mr. Donaldson, the nonconformist clergyman from Ewesland : a fussy, bearded little man, who began to apologize for venturing to call almost before the butler had announced him.

" This is a liberty, an intrusion," said Mr. Donaldson on the threshold. " A thousand apologies, sir."

General Mallock welcomed the humble caller, and told Kathleen to give him some tea.

" Sit down, Mr. Donaldson. Did you walk all the way up here ? "

" Yes, but you are too kind," and Mr. Donaldson still apologized. " I am guilty of a great liberty—

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molesting you thus, when you are in the bosom of your family," and he bowed to the young ladies. "Ah, how are you, friend Bryant?"

He had come to crave assistance for one of his congregation; and drawing his chair close to General Mallock's elbow, he soon got to work. "A sad business—"

Dr. Bryant, while talking to Miss Kathleen, heard most of the appeal. A poor road-mender out of employment through ill health, almost starving in his cottage, but too proud to go to the workhouse;—and employment obtainable, if one could only get some money to tide over a few weeks and send him on his journey.

General Mallock immediately offered to provide the money.

"There now, that's great of you." Mr. Donaldson was effusive in his thanks. "I thought we shouldn't be disappointed. Miss Mallock, forgive me, but you must hear this. I was sent here. I really didn't come of my own accord. I wouldn't have been so audacious."

And, beaming at the company, he narrated how he asked the sick man if he had not any friends who could help him in his need. The man replied that he had no friends. "Oh, come," Mr. Donaldson protested, "we all have friends. Providence never leaves us altogether friendless. Search your memory."

"Well, he scratched his head and thought—and then out came this: 'Go and ask th' ould General' . . . You forgive me, sir, for repeating the exact words. You know their rough way. They mean no disrespect by it—No, no, far from it. They all hold you in the highest respect, sir. . . . But when he said I was to go to you, sir—well, it made *me* scratch

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my head. What claim have we chapel folk on you gentlemen who belong to the church? None. I felt I couldn't molest you. But he said something that brought the tears to my eyes. 'When th' ould General sees me on the road, he always has a kind word, and I believe,' he said, 'that he has a kind heart behind the words. If th' ould General isn't a friend, I haven't got one.'

General Mallock had been folding some sovereigns in an envelope, and he handed the packet to Mr. Donaldson.

"My sincere thanks. A kind heart, and a large heart—the poor chap was right. I go away happy, sir—as happy as a bird,—and if prayers of gratitude are worth having, you'll have them to-night. . . . Miss Mallock, your honoured father is liberal-minded—and I wish I could say the same for the vicar of the parish."

Dr. Bryant observed that all this praise was not distasteful to the host. Respectful appreciation, no matter whence it came, did him good. It was a medicine to which he had been too long unaccustomed. He spoke genially and pleasantly to fussy effusive Mr. Donaldson, and for a time they chatted about local affairs in the most friendly fashion.

"You've heard, sir, of the row at the quarries?"

"No," said General Mallock, "I hear nothing. I am out of everything. I stand quite alone."

"But you know Lord Keighley? He visits here, does he not, sir?"

Lord Keighley was the local potentate, holder of much land, owner of the big slate quarries; and, according to Mr. Donaldson, he was likely to get into hot water with his quarrymen.

"That manager," said Donaldson, "is a bad adviser

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to his lordship. I say it openly, Mr. Gilchrist is harsh and stern—*his* heart might have been made out of the quarried slate, for any softness there is in it."

Dr. Bryant's thoughts had wandered. He glanced round the room, and it seemed to him extraordinarily pretty and cosy. He admired the open hearth and basket grate, with the firelight flickering on the brass dogs and white tiles; the chintz-covered chairs, the stone mullions and latticed panes of the window, the low book-cases full of richly-bound books; the work-boxes, writing-cases, illustrated journals, that told of feminine occupation—and he was conscious of a charming soothing atmosphere hitherto unfamiliar to him. These people were so different from the hard uncouth Yorkshire folk. They were refined, well-bred, gracious—and they were kind. No one could fail to comprehend that it was not a mere affectation of kindness and friendliness. It was the real thing.

"I beg your pardon."

Somebody had spoken to him. He glanced at Miss Mollie's fresh young face, looking so bright and full of life across the tea-cups. He glanced at Miss Kathleen. She was quiet, subdued, pale again, looking rather careworn—but he had not forgotten her appearance just now, when the flash and the glow were there.

"Will you give me a lift, doctor?" It was common uninteresting Mr. Donaldson, and not either of the young ladies, who had spoken to him. "I saw your carriage outside, and I'd be glad to save my legs as far as Elsworth cross roads."

"Oh, certainly."

Dr. Bryant rose from the comfortable chair, and bade adieu to his entertainers. Tea was over; he had stayed more than long enough. A cloud seemed

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slowly to have returned to the face of General Mallock ; Donaldson gave him a last salvo of thanks and praise, but apparently he did not listen ; Kathleen watched him anxiously.

" Father, Mr. Donaldson is saying good-bye."

" Oh, yes," said the General, in a weary, toneless voice. " Good-night to you."

" And do tell your friend Lord Keighley to use dipplummicity with the men."

" I am afraid," said Kathleen, " that Lord Keighley is a rather tactless person."

" Truly I hope not," said the nonconformist minister, with mild fervour. " I know the men. They're so easy to lead, but so difficult to drive. All that's wanted is just a leetle dipplummicity."

Dr. Bryant, as he glanced back from the doorway, saw General Mallock pick up his cloak with a restless hurried gesture, and heard Kathleen anxiously question him.

" Father, are you going out again ? "

" I don't know. Yes, I think I am. Yes, yes, I'll walk along the road and meet Geoffrey."

II

OUTSIDE the windows darkness had swallowed the wide moor, and inside the rooms lamps were burning brightly, when young Mallock reached his home. With a travelling rug over his shoulder and a hand-bag under his arm, he let himself into the silent hall and loudly proclaimed his arrival.

" Here I am," he called in his vigorous boyish voice. " Kathleen ! Mollie ! Where's everybody ? "

O'Kelly came shouting from the servants' offices.

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"Master Geoffrey! Yes, it is Master Geoffrey." The young ladies burst out of the morning-room.

"Geoffrey, Geoffrey!"

In a moment the quiet house was full of healthy noise.

"Gi' me your bag, sir," said O'Kelly. "Whwat have ye done with the dog-cart? Oh, but he's grown, Miss Kathleen."

The young ladies were hugging and kissing their schoolboy brother, giving him the most rapturous reception. With a sister clinging to each arm, he was lovingly dragged into the brighter light of the morning-room, and there disencumbered of rug and bag.

"Ye tuk the short cut then," said O'Kelly, "and left the cart to follow—but ye've missed the General."

"Yes," said Kathleen, "you've missed father;" and she and Mollie gently drew Mr. Geoffrey to the big armchair between the hearth and the tea-table.

"The General," said O'Kelly, "went to meet ye down the road. . . . My word, but he's grown. He's as tall as me own self. Will ye stand beside me, shoulder to shoulder, sir, and let's see?"

"Oh, don't worry him," expostulated Mollie.

"Sit down, Geoffrey dear," said Kathleen tenderly.

"Well, you old gas-bag," said Geoffrey, greeting O'Kelly with facetious heartiness, "how are you?"

"O've much to be thankful for," and O'Kelly laughed jovially. "I still sit up and take regular nourishment."

"O'Kelly," said Mollie, with crushing severity, "will you for a moment recollect that you are the butler, and be good enough to get Mr. Geoffrey some tea."

"Yes, miss, indeed I shall;" and O'Kelly rushed away, raising his voice to a cordial bellow as he passed

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through the hall. "Some hot tea, and some hot cakes. The hottest cakes!"

Until Frederick the footman appeared with the fresh tea, Mollie sat on the arm of her brother's chair and Kathleen sat on a stool at his feet, and pattings and hand claspings were very freely indulged in. Laughter sounded loudly and merrily; all three of them were like light-hearted children, and Kathleen seemed to enjoy schoolboy jokes and noisy fun just as much as Mollie.

"Glad to see you, sir," said the footman.

"How are you, Frederick? . . . Yes, you've grown."

"Oh, sir."

"You were just going to say it, weren't you? So I saved you the trouble."

Frederick smiled and nodded; and went out to report to the maid-servants that the young master had come home as chaffing and jolly as ever, and several inches taller than he had been last holidays.

"Dear old Geoff," said Kathleen, giving him his second cup of tea. "This *is* nice, having you back again."

"And all to ourselves," said Mollie. "Tell us some more school news."

"No, let's have your news now;" and suddenly Geoffrey lowered his voice, and his face became very serious. "How's the governor getting through the day?"

"Badly," and Kathleen also spoke in a low grave voice. "Mollie, I think we ought to send after him, to tell him that Geoff has arrived."

"Oh, he won't go far. Besides, he'd see the cart," and Mollie spoke sombrely but pleadingly. "Let's have Geoff to ourselves for just a little while."

At the mention of their father's name all the gaiety

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had vanished ; a cloud took the brightness from the three faces ; and each voice lost its pleasant careless note.

But Mollie quickly recovered the note.

"Geoff, I'm going to have such a lovely time in York. I'm to be taken to the soldiers' ball and——"

" Soldiers' ball ! You young rotter, you must mean a juvenile party."

"No, I don't," said Mollie. "I mean grown-up dances."

"But I thought we weren't out."

"Not theoretically," said Miss Mollie. "But York isn't the same thing as London—though it's every bit as nice."

Kathleen was looking at her brother affectionately and admiringly. To her eye he was a perfect example of what a boy of seventeen ought to be—splendidly tall and handsome, candid and open, brave and good, and, as she hoped and believed, very clever.

"But Geoff," she cried, "what's the matter with your forehead ? "

Leaning forward in his chair, he had come into the luminous circle of the lamp ; and she saw some ugly red marks on the bridge of his nose and one eyebrow, with dark-tinted discolouration of orbits and cheekbone.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Geoffrey ; and he got up and stood by the fire. "I did it ballyragging and playing the fool after prizes. I tell you it's nothing. Go on with the news."

And Mollie went on babbling about the wild joys of her approaching visit to York.

"It seems to me," said Geoffrey, "that it's going to be pretty flat for you, Kath, old girl, while she's away."

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"Oh, I shall be all right."

"I couldn't be any use," said Mollie apologetically, "if I stopped here. Kathleen and father will be so busy doing the book."

"Ah," said Geoffrey. "The book, yes! When's he going to start it?"

"Almost at once," said Kathleen gravely.

"And she is to help him," said Mollie. "She has bought a type-writing machine. . . . But, Geoffrey, she says they won't put a word about the shadow."

"She's so silly," said Kathleen. "She doesn't understand."

"No, of course," said Geoffrey seriously, "he wouldn't speak of that in print."

"And the whole purpose of the book," said Kathleen, "is to get rid of the shadow."

"Of course," Geoffrey had moved slowly across the room. He gave himself a shake, and obviously endeavoured to resume his lively air.

It was very curious to observe. Gloom sounded in their voices—once more the three young faces were clouded. It was as if the shadow had visibly fallen upon them: as if even from a little distance, through stone walls and closed doors, General Mallock could throw about his family some of the darkness in which he was walking.

"Hush," said Kathleen, holding up her hand. "That's father. I heard his footstep on the gravel."

"Geoffrey, my dear boy;" and the General gave his son a friendly slap on the shoulder.

"He came up the bridle path," said Kathleen. "That's how he missed you."

"We all think he has grown," said Mollie.

"Welcome, Geoffrey—welcome. Yes, what a great

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fellow ! Well, well—how have you done this term ? ” And, without waiting for an answer, General Mallock began to walk restlessly about the room.

“ I’ve done rather well, father. . . . I got a prize.”

“ How ripping ! ” said Kathleen warmly, but in a subdued tone. “ Geoff, that is grand. Show us your prize.”

But Geoffrey shook his head negatively.

“ To-morrow. Not now.”

“ Oh, we must see it,” said Mollie excitedly. “ Is it here ? ” and she pointed to the hand-bag.

“ Leave it alone, can’t you ? ” said Geoffrey.

“ So you have earned a prize,” said his father. “ Capital ! Fetch it, Geoff.”

“ Here it is,” said Mollie. Disregarding her brother’s frowns, she had opened the bag and fished out the prize. “ What a lovely binding ! ”

“ Well done, Geoff.” General Mallock took the volume, opened it, and read the title aloud. “ *Our Eastern Empire !* ” He looked up with a start, and then slowly read the full title. “ *Our Eastern Empire : The way we have won it and held it !* ”

“ How dry and uninteresting ! ” said Kathleen.

“ Yes, isn’t it ? ” said Geoffrey hurriedly. “ I didn’t choose it. We had no choice ; ” and he tried hard to speak gaily. “ They gave one chap *Silkworm Culture.* ”

“ Silkworms ! ” said Kathleen, simulating amusement. “ How utterly absurd.”

“ Yes, wasn’t it ? For a fifth-form boy ! . . . Sir Henry Standish came down and gave away the prizes.”

“ Harry Standish ? ” said old Mallock vaguely. “ What’s his connection with the school ? ”

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"His son is there."

"A chum of yours?" asked Kathleen.

"No," said Geoffrey, with sudden heat. "I should jolly well think not. An insolent cad!"

General Mallock put down the Indian book, and, with his hands clasped behind his back, paced to and fro.

"Standish, yes. Harry Standish! . . . Geoffrey, did General Standish speak to you?"

"Oh, yes. He gave me the prize."

O'Kelly and the footman came into the room to take away the tea-things, and there was a long silence before General Mallock spoke again. He walked up and down as if deep in thought.

"Geoffrey;" and, turning, he looked at his son intently and wistfully. "Did General Standish speak of *me*?"

"Yes. He said he knew I was your son."

"He—he didn't send me any message?"

"Let me see. He said he knew you years ago—quite well."

"Why, he came to me as a subaltern at Agra—and I gave him his first chance. He has forgotten that by now, I suppose." And then General Mallock, looking at his son very intently, noticed the bruised nose and the black eye. "Hullo, Geoff, what have you been up to? Had a fall?"

"Oh, that's nothing." Geoffrey blushed, and betrayed confusion. "We were ragging——"

General Mallock turned away again, and resumed the restless pacing to and fro. Kathleen and Mollie, seeing their brother's embarrassment, looked at him sympathetically and wonderingly as he concluded his rather lame explanation of the school accident. O'Kelly watched and listened, with a grin on his broad face.

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"Yes, I was messing about outside our study—last night—and I hit something in the dark."

"And what you hit in the dark," whispered O'Kelly, roguishly, "hit you back, Master Geoffrey—like that;" and he made a pantomimic gesture with his right fist.

"Shut up, you ass," said Geoffrey in an angry whisper.

But Mollie could not refrain from blurting out an eager question.

"You had a fight?"

O'Kelly, still grinning, had gone out with the tea-tray; General Mallock was near the door of the inner room; and before he turned again, Kathleen and Mollie whispered more questions.

"With young Standish? You fought young Standish?"

"About *him*?"

"What had he said?"

"Oh, he tried to be funny," whispered Geoffrey. "Look out."

But unfortunately General Mallock had heard the whispers. He came slowly from the inner door, and again laid a hand on his son's shoulder.

"So you took up the cudgels for me?"

"Oh," said Geoffrey, with a brave attempt at facetiousness, "I didn't hit him with a stick."

"My poor boy, I fear you were fighting a lost cause."

"Oh, no, father, I gave him all he wanted."

"You—you bear your bruises like a man." General Mallock's eyes looked clouded and dim, and he spoke jerkily and huskily. "Thank you, Geoff—thank you. But—but I can't have you fighting for—fighting for a lost cause."

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III

A CHANCE had brought Dr. Bryant to this out-of-the-way corner of Yorkshire. One summer he came up here as locum-tenens ; and when Dr. Parrott, wishing to retire, offered him the practice for practically nothing, it seemed an opportunity that it would be wrong to refuse. He would be able to earn some money—and money would be extremely useful to a mother and two sisters more or less dependent on him ;—and he need not stay at Ewesland for ever. Only a fool should bury himself while still strenuously alive. That was what he told himself frequently ; it was the idea that he felt he ought to keep prominently in view—no need to stay for ever, to stick fast to the moorside like the boulders embedded in the purple heather, or grow heavy and opaque and slow like the boggy streams that trickled and oozed through the brown moss.

He was a southerner, and he often longed for the softer speech and milder air of his native Hampshire ; he saw no beauty in the hard bold aspect of the northern landscape ; and at first he disliked the dour aggressive manners of the northern people. But he did his work honestly and well ; and the rough farmers and the rougher quarrymen who formed the bulk of his patients trusted him and praised him. Perhaps the sense that his services were valued and that he himself was becoming popular sweetened the labours of his daily round ; he began to understand the sterling qualities hidden beneath rough exteriors ; soon he believed that if he stayed long enough, he would grow sentimentally fond of Yorkshire ways and Yorkshire words.

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However, he must not allow time for that to happen. To stay indefinitely, year after year, would mean the end of all proper professional hopes and ambitions.

He lived at the bottom of Ewesland's one steep street, where the inn, the few shops, and the grey old church are clustered together beneath the frowning brow of the hill. Once the village was pretty, insignificant, apparently safe from change; but then the vast slate quarries were opened out, and it was given over to frank quick-spreading hideousness. It became a refuse heap of broken slate: hedges, garden walls, arbours, made of slate; the waste of the quarries pouring into the valley, filling it, choking it; grey mountains rising where beech trees had waved their green boughs; a slate carpet stretching across the meadows; an embankment of slate running round the churchyard, and railway trucks jerking and jolting on a level with the crocketed corners of the church tower. And in these days the village street ascended into a slate town—endless rows of ugly cottages built for the slate-workers; and beyond it, far up the moor, another and another of such settlements; every village within reach of the slate mercilessly disfigured by a hastily erected workman's town.

Further down the valley, between Ewesland and Bevistown, the country was untouched. Fertile fields greeted one; woods and copses smiled at one faintly from a distance, and substantial prosperous-looking farmhouses gleamed pleasantly white and clean in the winter sunlight. Here, for three miles down the vale, and on the outer fringe of the old market town of Bevis, lay the cream of Dr. Bryant's practice. The hard work was all on the hills among the slate; but the good pay could only be reaped on the low ground among the fields.

He never grudged the work, and had not so far

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shown himself greedy for remuneration. Though he came home tired after the long day's rounds, he used to go on working—often to a late hour. A doctor, when he cuts himself off from hospital practice, is a lost man unless he reads assiduously. Text-books and scientific journals are, of course, a poor substitute for the diversified experience of wards and operating theatres, but they save a man from sinking into a condition of self-satisfied incompetence; and Bryant was keenly anxious to avoid the rust that so soon dims the intelligent brightness of country practitioners. Every evening he thought of his cases and studied the authorities. He had brought his entire medical library with him; and if the day had furnished nothing more startling or recondite than a mild attack of measles, he would conscientiously refresh himself with the wisdom of the specialists, and let them tell him once again all that they knew about this trivial ailment and its possible sequelæ.

But these lengthy winter evenings spent in solitude and study were dull, most appallingly dull. When his dinner was finished he dawdled as he lighted a pipe, and he clung to the company of his housekeeper or her daughter while she cleared the table—was glad to talk about anything, however insignificant.

"Miss Purvis called this afternoon, sir, and said that Mrs. Purvis had took her medicine and was the better for it."

"Oh, I'm pleased to hear that."

"But Miss Purvis said, all the same they hoped you'd find time to go and see them to-morrow."

"Yes, I intended to look in. I'll do so without fail."

"Anything more, sir?"

"No—thank you, nothing more. There are coals in the scuttle, aren't there?"

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"Yes, sir."

Dr. Bryant could ask for nothing more. He had been given his simple meal ; the room had been made tidy again ; the fire was burning clear, and there were coals ready to replenish it. He could not ask his servant to stay a little longer and give him sympathy, human companionship, moral support.

Slowly and rather languidly he used to select one of the heavy uninviting volumes from the shelf by the fireplace, bring out a note-book or two, and settle himself in the easy chair.

It would have been so much pleasanter if the district had afforded just a little society for its doctor. But really there was no social intercourse worth speaking of. Had he chosen to do so, he might no doubt have made friends among the Bevistown tradesmen ; there was some sort of town club over there ; but the town, with its billiard-playing drapers and corn chandlers, did not attract him. Closer at hand there was fussy little Donaldson, who lived near his ugly chapel on the hill ; there was Mr. Gilchrist, the quarry manager, who lived down the hill beyond the bridge and the orchards ; only a few doors away on the other side of the street there were Mrs. Purvis and her amiable buxom commonplace daughter, who lived in rooms over the grocer's shop ; and, lastly, there was the vicar, who lived in the snug vicarage, who was very good, very narrow-minded, very deaf, and who regularly went to bed at nine p.m. winter and summer. That composed the list of possible associates in Ewesland.

Outside Ewesland there were no gentry within reach —the few large houses were widely scattered, far away down the dale country ; and they contained men who hunted and shot together, who had known one another as boys, and who did not seek out lonely strangers from

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the hills. And Lord Keighley, over at Redchurch Park, was apparently too great a magnate even to be aware of the existence of a village doctor.

Bryant, by nature modest and retiring, by birth humbly placed in the world's esteem, had no snobbish cravings to enter jealously-guarded circles ; but, as an educated man, he would have liked some opportunities of relaxation in the company of people who measure speech and thought by the ordinary standard of gentle-folk's refinement and cultivation.

Sometimes, while he puffed at his pipe and held the medical treatise still unopened on his knees, he felt the heavy burden of loneliness ; he thought of the preposterously wide difference between childhood's hopes and the realizations of manhood ; he saw the road of life as he had once mapped it, passing through strangely romantic scenes from adventure to adventure, always rising, broadening, becoming more brilliantly illuminated ; and he saw the other, the real road, as it stretched interminably before him, narrow, featureless, straight and dim, going downhill until the darkness hid it from sight. And then, half closing his eyes, he used to drop into a musing dream.

But to-night, before he began to read, he thought with strong interest of those people in the distant house on the edge of Long Moor. Really nice people—those Mallocks ! Something about the old gentleman which aroused swift sympathy and almost poignant regret. Something very fine too—pathetically fine—in the devotion of that tall dark-haired girl. How resolute she seemed in her blind faith, how watchful in her care, how tenderly anxious to shield and aid ! Very sad, of course, the broken career of the white-headed father, and the morbidly-persistent dwelling on an irrevocable past—sad and yet most interesting. The

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poor old chap had shown the white feather. There was the end of it. But a very curious psychological study was offered by his present state of mind.

An interesting case: an extremely interesting case from certain points of view. Dr. Bryant, thinking it over, determined to devote himself to the case as far as possible—to help the nice daughter, if he could.

At last he opened the volume that he had selected from the shelf. The subject to-night was mental diseases, and he rapidly turned the pages till he found the chapter he wanted. Then, under the heading Monomania, he read with close attention. Presently he brought out a pencil and marked the margin of a passage.

"Above all, it should be remembered that each condition shades off imperceptibly into another, and there are no clearly-marked transitions that can safely be relied on in diagnosis: you have a progress which one may define, but one cannot analyse—a man with a grievance, a man with a dominant idea, a madman."

IV

GENERAL MALLOCK had started his book.

One morning he showed Kathleen half a page of manuscript, and asked her what she thought of it.

"I have made a mass of notes already—I possess heaps of material; and this is my opening. How does it strike you?"

Eagerly looking at the leaf of foolscap, she saw that his very first word was Andalkund.

"Andalkund," he had written, "stands alone on the table-land above the Shandar Valley, and it is the northernmost frontier-post that the Indian government ever attempted to hold. The foul vultures

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hover over its crumbling walls ; the barren hills frown at it ; all round the rocks on which it is built there lies an arid waste without a tree, a rivulet, or a blade of grass to refresh the traveller's eye. Seen in the heavy silence of the mid-day heat, it looks like a dead town forsaken by God and man." . . .

" But," said Kathleen doubtfully, " you won't begin with this, will you, father ? "

" Why not ? It's what I've got to write about."

" Only to dash right at it at once might seem too abrupt.

" Does that strike you as abrupt ? " And the General looked crestfallen. " I tried to make it flowery and ornamental—because I thought it was the correct thing. I notice that authors always open their books with a few fine phrases."

Kathleen, knitting her brows and strenuously considering the matter, advised him to lead the reader to the walls of Andalkund more gradually. She thought that he ought to describe the state of affairs, to tell how he came to be sent up the valley, and to record the position of all available troops.

" And, father, you must say how strongly you advised them against sending forward the stores and ammunition."

" Yes, yes. I see what you mean."

" And I think, you know, you should give a full sketch of yourself and your previous career."

" Very well," said the General meekly ; and he would have torn up his manuscript, had she not prevented him.

" No, keep it, father—as material. It's beautifully worded. It will be splendid in its right place."

He brightened at this compliment.

" You must hold me straight, my dear. I am chaotic

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—because I have so much to say. But with your help I feel that I shall pull through—and make a business-like job of it."

She confidently promised to keep him straight ; and day after day he appeared to be more keen and eager at his task. He was scrawling his notes with a boldness and rapidity that rendered them almost illegible ; and Kathleen was laboriously transcribing them, and then typewriting them after she had read them aloud to him. Later they were all to be put into elegant shape and logical sequence.

But soon his industrious energy changed to fitful ardour. He would write a few lines and then fall into brooding idleness.

"Kathleen, I am not getting on well to-day. My pen is shirking. I wait—but the thoughts all rush together, and I don't know which to choose ;" and he looked at her with the wistful expression that she knew so well, and that she never saw without a touch of heart-ache. "This is a very difficult job—a *confusing* job."

"Don't worry about it, father ;" and she came to the side of his chair, stooped, and kissed his forehead. "I expect you are tired to-day. Don't do any more. Go out to the range—or come for a walk with me."

"But I don't like to leave my work. That seems such a feeble thing to do."

"No. You'll get on all the faster to-morrow. And don't doubt that the book will be all right in the end. Remember, the *facts* are what we rely on. Even if we told it badly, the truth of our story would win us all that we want."

She herself could not doubt, would not for a moment allow of doubt that this final effort was about to reverse the judgment of the world.

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Yet what had General Mallock to tell now that he had not told already? His attitude was as of a man bursting with a sense of unjust treatment; he believed that those in power had dealt cruelly with him; but he had said all this fifteen years ago. What could he hope for in saying it again?

After the disaster he had been immediately superseded, sent to the depot at Peshawur; and there he received a censure against which he violently protested. He demanded that he should be tried by Court-martial—and this was refused. He was advised to keep quiet, and to recognize with gratitude that he had been let off lightly. But instead of accepting this official hint, he did a very foolish thing—he took the newspapers into his confidence, published a full statement of the case and his justification of his personal conduct. For this flagrant breach of discipline he was dismissed the service.

During a few months the newspaper press continued to busy itself with his name and fame, and then he was dropped as a played-out and exhausted attraction. Newspaper readers had had enough of him. The great public, making up its own mind, decided against him.

His wife, a pretty Irishwoman, had money; he himself had private means; it seemed that he might retire into private life, and soon forget the storm through which he had passed. Time is often the best advocate that a wise man can employ; time makes the biggest things look small; time works wonders.

But even while little children, his daughters and his son learned to understand that there was a stigma attaching to the family name, that father suffered under unmerited misfortune, and that by the stern decree of fate they must suffer with him. It was a shadow

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on their lives. Nothing else could describe it. Just a want of brightness and sunshine—a coldness and dullness in the atmosphere. Not perpetually there, but always returning.

Kathleen remembered when it first touched her. Her mother told her that she must be very good, and do her lessons quietly, and not rush about the house—because father was unhappy. And mother was unhappy too—at least, mother's eyes were wet with tears ; and, as she held the little girl on her lap, tight-clasped in her arms, she began to sob again. "Kathleen, my darling, your father has been very unjustly treated ; and it is nearly breaking his heart. But it must be our task to console him. *Our* faith can never be shaken. We know he is the noblest and the best of men." That was how the shadow first touched and faintly chilled the thoughts of Kathleen.

Later it was she who had to tell Mollie and Geoffrey, and to watch the shadow fall on them. There were things that puzzled them—chance allusions, stray words, significant silences—queerly unintelligible things that set them wondering ; and they each in turn asked the elder sister for explanations.

People were always kind to them ; but such kindness was poisoned ; it was an insult, because it seemed so pointedly to discriminate between them and their father. For him, visible to their young eyes, there was a cruelly distant politeness, a systematically attempted avoidance, an ice-cold courtesy in rare intercourse—with, now and then, the most odious manifestation of all, an ill-concealed pity.

Wherever they made their home—London for a time, Brighton, Torquay, the South of France—it was the same story ; clubs touting for members and suddenly closing their doors against one candidate ;

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strangers who had been friendly and cordial unexpectedly displaying cold aloofness ; invitations fenced with, postponed, evaded ; slights, negligences, humiliations. Often Kathleen used to think with passionate anger of these people who judged and dared to condemn him—not only hard-faced soldiers, but smug, sleek civilians who had done nothing grander or more difficult than to eat, sleep, and grow fat. Even this hostess at York, to whom Mollie had gone so gladly to snatch a little innocent joy and excitement, could not be hospitable without implying that it would be socially advantageous to the younger Miss Mallock if she could be removed for a while from her father's narrow circle. And this woman, a cousin of Mrs. Mallock, was the kindest of all their connections. Yet even she could not confer benefits without inflicting wounds.

It was Mrs. Mallock's failing health, bringing with it a dread of English winters, that took them year after year to the French or Italian riviera ; but after his wife's death the grief-stricken widower might choose his dwelling where he pleased, no matter how rigorous the climate. To Kathleen at least, it did not seem strange that he should show a disinclination for gay scenes and fashionable neighbourhoods. When he described to her the place he had seen in Yorkshire she could understand easily enough why he should wish to buy it and make their new home there. Its remoteness and its inaccessibility formed its attraction. He wanted to get right away from everybody. She herself had almost the same feeling ; she encouraged him to buy the lonely house on the moor ; they would do better all by themselves, beyond the reach of the friends whose friendship had proved so valueless.

Now they had been in Yorkshire for nearly three

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years, and even the loneliness of his life at Long Moor House had not saved him from the old discomforts.

Gradually he settled down to the toil of authorship. The steadfast energy required for sustained effort seemed coming to him; he became more and more engrossed; before long he was absolutely and completely absorbed by his work.

He returned to it at all hours. In the evening after dinner he would suddenly ask Kathleen to get out her typewritten sheets—for alterations, amendments, additions. Once he came and tapped at her bedroom-door, and woke her in the middle of the night to tell her of a new idea.

Instantly awake and attentive, she welcomed and applauded the idea. Tinged perhaps with the glamour and mystery of the deep night, it seemed subtle and wonderful.

"Well done, father. That's splendid. Now you can sleep soundly, after having such a clever inspiration."

Next morning, when considered by daylight, the idea did not seem to amount to much. Somehow the best of it seemed to have evaporated. There was difficulty in pinning it down to paper. However, the author and his secretary made a careful note—preserving all that remained of it—to be set aside as material, and used "in its proper place."

The long mornings were spent in the General's sitting-room—the General at his desk in front of a big bureau, Kathleen at a respectful distance with a small writing table for notes and transcripts, ready to take dictation, to listen, to advise, or merely to give moral support. All typewriting was done in the adjacent morning-room; no sound of the machine

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must disturb the author during the hours of composition.

Thus, with now unremitting toil, the weeks glided past them. There was nothing to interrupt, nothing to turn them from their purpose; they had the house to themselves; and an expectant hush seemed to fill it, isolating them still further from the ordinary interests of life, wrapping them round with the opaque and impenetrable curtains that are woven by concentrated undeviating thought of a single subject.

Geoffrey was back at his school. Mollie, at York, was meeting with pleasures that surpassed her most excited anticipations. In her letters she spoke rapturously of point-to-point races, of amateur theatricals, and impromptu dances. She had visited the cavalry barracks and made the acquaintance of the Hussar officers, who wore transcendently beautiful uniforms, and who, like glorious hospitable creatures, were about to give a ball—to which Mollie would certainly go. It was one of the finest regiments in the cavalry; many experts considered it a grander corps than the Horse Guards or Life Guards; Mollie for her part could imagine nothing more impressive than its appearance as it passed through the streets, with kettledrums booming, trumpets blaring, accoutrements flashing and glittering. And so on and so forth—Mollie was enjoying herself, and said so enthusiastically. As her sister read the sprawling babyish handwriting, she seemed to hear the eager young voice speaking; but she was unable to conjure up any pictures of the sights described. Mollie and all the rest of the world were for the present blocked out, and could not force an entrance into the restricted zone of mental activity.

The book had begun to take some sort of shape; the first five or six chapters were roughly drafted;

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Kathleen, arranging and rearranging the chaos of her father's notes, had mapped out for him guiding lines for future progress, with fixed points that he was to keep in view and always be aiming at. He could not, without her constant aid, keep to any definite line: he was a man bubbling over with a grievance; protestations, excuses, arguments, rose to the surface unseasonably and inappropriately; stung by recollection of his wrongs, he hurried on precipitately to the events that occasioned them.

"But, father, we've not arrived at that yet."

"Let me write it down now and get it off my mind. I'll just make a note—and you must get it into its proper place for me."

He frequently came back to that consoling phrase—"its proper place;" and Kathleen, who had invented it, sometimes feared that they were too greatly relying on its efficacy. Sometimes her dreams were troubled, nightmares whirled her to dark abysses of doubt and horror, when throughout a long day she had been thinking of the heavy duties that lay before her. Would she ever be able to allot places so proper that her father's narration would finally appear consecutive, lucid, and logical?

She wished that she knew more about the art of authorship, that she had undergone a regular literary training; but on the whole she was well-pleased with results so far. This earlier portion of the book, though admittedly an unpolished sketch, looked so nice in the typewriting, and it read quite flowingly and easily.

"Father," she said confidently, "I'm *sure* it's all right. I believe that even a bad book would have carried the reader along, merely by the weight of the facts; but this is going to be a real good book—a book worthy of you."

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When she encouraged him by such a speech as this, he used to sit very erect in his chair, throw back his head, and look at her with glowing eyes.

"Do you really mean it, Kathleen?"

"Yes, on my honour, I do."

"My dear, you put fresh heart into me. I was afraid I had got dull and prosy—and long-winded. But now, after your compliment, I shall forge ahead faster than ever."

And he would smile, rub his hands together contentedly, and then hastily pick up his pen and set to work again.

She had no doubt whatever that the daily task was doing him good. The harder he worked, the better he looked; she noticed a brightness in his eyes which was altogether unusual; his manner seemed less repressed and hesitating; he was altogether more cheerful than he had been at any period during the last year.

She told their only visitor that the book, if considered merely as a means of providing her father with amusement and occupation, had already proved itself a triumphant success.

Dr. Bryant, as he promised, very soon paid a second call at Long Moor House. He found General Mallock busily engaged upon his note-making, and he received a courteous though unmistakable hint that no further visits were desirable or necessary. But Dr. Bryant artfully drew him to the matter of rifle-shooting, in which he professed the strongest interest. With little difficulty he prevailed on the General to conduct him to the meadows for an inspection of the almost completed range. Out there, while examining and admiring the trench and earth-works, Dr. Bryant in his turn dropped courteously worded hints; and the General,

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correctly interpreting them, presently invited him to come and shoot whenever he pleased to do so.

After this he was free to pay unprofessional calls. He provided himself with a miniature rifle, and often had half an hour's practice under the instruction of O'Kelly. The sergeant-butler was great at this amateur musketry drill ; all the men-servants on the place submitted themselves to his direction, and he assured Dr. Bryant that "me and the General will learn them how to hold straight before we've done with 'em."

Sometimes the General joined the party, and then O'Kelly dropped into his subordinate rank and only issued orders as the mouth-piece of his commander. Dr. Bryant showed a good deal of cleverness in luring General Mallock away from his desk and out to the open air. Nearly every time that he appeared with his rifle under his arm, he persuaded the owner of the range to come out and keep him company.

Kathleen was very grateful to him for his tact and discretion ; she had many quiet talks with him about her father's health, and he seemed always to respond sympathetically to her hopes or wishes.

"Yes," he said, "I quite agree. I think the General is unquestionably in better spirits than he was a month ago."

"You told us that he wanted cheering up, and that we were to find things for him to do. Well, he has found something for himself—in his writing, you know. He works at it magnificently."

"Yes, but you mustn't let him overdo it. Moderation is necessary ;" and Dr. Bryant, scrutinizing Miss Mallock's pale face, displayed the greatest possible sympathy. "You must spare yourself also. You are looking tired."

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"Oh, I'm all right," said Kathleen. "I simply love the work."

Nevertheless the constant strain of it was telling on her.

They had reached the disastrous period now. That is to say, General Mallock, no longer to be restrained, had again broken the chronological sequence and was writing his most important chapters before their turn had come.

Watching him as he wrote, she saw the changes in his face. Sometimes the pen rushed on with reckless speed, and the blood mounted to his forehead, his eyes glowed, his lips trembled. Sometimes the pen moved slowly and heavily, hesitated, stopped after painful struggles, and then he looked white and shaky, and very old. He was living through the dark hours once again. He was marching up the valley of death ; he had entered the fatal town ;—the British flag hung limply in the burning mid-day heat. . . .

And she was with him. She was passing through the narrow malodorous streets ; she was by his side in the courtyard, amidst the motley crowd that filled it until the tired and dust-stained soldiers drove back the pressing throng and made space for the incoming guns and wagons. The parched air was noisy with a babel of tongues ; dark-faced unveiled women leaned out of lofty windows ; every dweller in the town wanted to see the great English chieftain who had come with pomp and might to protect and guard the faithful servants of his empire. For days doubt and fear had lain heavy on their hearts ; but now they felt safe ; the chieftain and the white troops were here.

In imagination she could see it all. The walls of the comfortable room faded. This was Andalkund. Awake

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or asleep she could think of nothing else now ; by day and by night she was dreaming of it ; nothing else had the least importance, or even reality. This only was real.

But the silence of the house, growing deeper and deeper, seemed so oppressive that her nerves began to suffer under it. A footstep in the hall, the sudden opening or shutting of a door, an unexpected voice, would startle her so greatly that she trembled and turned cold. The house seemed haunted : it was given over to ghosts, illusions, nightmares ; it had been filled with dead thoughts that now were coming to life again.

She was glad to get out of the house. It seemed cowardly, almost disloyal to *him* ; yet as she walked fast along the rough moor tracks, she tried to shake off the gloom and distress that had been crushing her. But she could not get away from the haunting picture of the frontier town. She was forced to carry it with her, to fit it to each change of surroundings, to make of every view of the bleak landscape a new frame for it.

The heather faded and vanished ; the tufted grass had gone ; the earth for miles showed brown and bare. This was the sun-dried table-land of Andalkund. The low ridge of moor was the vast mountain range ; the boggy hollows and the disused stone-pits were ravines in which the tribesmen lay hid ; in all directions, behind every natural rampart, the crafty foes were working their way unseen. By to-morrow's dawn they would have surrounded the doomed fortress.

No. *Not* a fortress. That was what could never be admitted—even in nightmare dreams. She hurried on, walking faster and faster, fleeing from the dread that haunted her. Nothing would ever shake her

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faith ; but perhaps the cold fear that sometimes underlay her thoughts nearly forced her to questions which she refused to formulate mentally. Could he have acted differently ? Could he, by any possibility have saved the honour of the flag ?

When she returned and saw the house at a distance, it looked hard and forbidding—a solid cube of masonry defying the winds and rains ; grim and cheerless, not like a home ; and she vaguely wished that it could have suited her father and yet have been pretty too—built of red brick instead of drab stone, low and rambling, with gables and re-entrant angles, and warmly clad with creepers. As she opened the porch door and crossed the threshold, the dead weight of the unfinished book seemed to fall on her.

Once or twice she spoke of her anxiety—an anxiety growing more intense now every day—that he should set forth with the utmost possible clearness the main motive that impelled him to the surrender. He was now tackling the critical epoch ; he *must* make this part of the book strong and convincing ; it is on this that success or failure depends. Her anxiety became very great indeed when she watched him during long pauses and hesitations.

"Stick to it, father," she said once. "It is now or never."

"Yes, my dear ; but I find it difficult—more difficult than I guessed. I seem to have too much to say—and yet I fear I repeat myself."

"We can cut things out later. Only, try now to put forward your plainest arguments ;" and she gently urged him to make a strong point of the fact that he could not have offered battle without jeopardizing hundreds of innocent lives. "The women and children, father ! That was the consideration which

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decided you. I'm sure you can't put that too forcibly."

"Yes," he said, in a low voice. "That was it—the women and children."

He laid down the pen, and sat staring at the pattern of the carpet. All the brightness was gone from his eyes; a dull cloud had descended upon him; he looked white, and old and feeble.

"Yes—yes." With an effort he roused himself. "Yes—I shan't forget. You are quite right. That was the trouble—and the folly of putting munitions of war in an indefensible place."

V

THE spring had come tardily to this northward land, and although the copses and meadows of the dales were green and gay with young foliage and blossoming flowers, the aspect of cold winter still lingered on the moors.

Kathleen, starting for her walk one afternoon and passing through the sunk lane at the back of the house, saw some wild hyacinths, and instinctively turned southward across Redchurch Down towards the sheltered slopes above the Bevistown valley. Behind her, sweeping away to seemingly infinite distances, was the open sea of heather: if one wished to be gladdened with the sight of the quickening life in trees and fields, one must go far and fast to the south.

The sunk lane, rising to the level of the heath, brought her out to a cart track, and she walked along it for a couple of miles before the landscape began to change its character. Then the horizon receded as the ground fell; far-off undulations of grassy hills came into view;

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and soon one had a glimpse of the broad vale, wooded, watered, cultivated, seeming to tell of warm days and steady sunshine.

Yet still the sense of solitude was unbroken. It had widened and extended, but it remained always. Standing by the gap of a low stone wall, she looked downward at this map-like peep of fertile country. Far to the right, but hidden by the bulwark of moor, were Ewesland and the quarries; far ahead, but shut out by the lower hills, was Bevistown; only a mile away to the left the dense woods of oak and beech and fir concealed Redchurch park and house; and not a single human dwelling was as yet visible. Sheep dotted like white stones in the hill-side fields, rooks like black dust floating above the tree-tops;—but no smoke from a cottage chimney; no man, woman, or child stirring; not the faintest sound of a voice, except the bleat of the sheep, and the call of the birds.

She went through two or three gates, and struck into a better kept track that led sharply down hill to the Redchurch woods. Here she paused again, looking towards the emerald green foliage of the beeches and the yellow amber of the oaks. This was the domain of the biggest local landowner, Lord Keighley; and a notice board at every gate offered a reminder that one stood on private property. At each entrance to the woods a warning, rather than a notice, stared one in the face—"No admittance. Private road. Trespassers will be prosecuted," and so on.

The private roads no doubt all led one to the stately house that she had several times seen, but never once entered. Lord Keighley's mansion of Redchurch, as it disclosed itself to the public on the high road that passed the park gates, seemed very grand and imposing—classic portico and double wings, ornamental

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balustrades, and terraced gardens. And no doubt this noble residence was as forbiddingly magnificent inside as outside.

As she turned away from the sylvan charms of Redchurch and walked slowly homeward, she was thinking of the house and its owner.

And it chanced that she was still thinking about Lord Keighley when the sound of horses' hoofs made her look up, and she unexpectedly saw him riding towards her.

He had a groom with him; but he curtly told the groom to ride on, and stopped to talk to Miss Mallock.

"Dull, beastly sort of afternoon, isn't it?" said his lordship. "Are we ever to get any decent weather?"

"Oh, I hope so."

"Seems a long time coming, anyhow."

He was a big, solid, heavily-built man of about thirty-five; clean-shaven and fresh-complexioned; with an air of complete, almost aggressive self-reliance, and a rather abrupt manner; but nevertheless conveying an idea that he was thoroughly well-intentioned and kindly.

Kathleen's first impression of him had been that he was very kind—the only person up here who intended to be really kind, really nice. But latterly he had forfeited her good opinion.

"Where are you heading for? Home?"

"Yes. I am heading for home."

He had questioned her smilingly, in a genial friendly way; but she answered with coldness and constraint, and without the flicker of a smile.

"Well, I want to stretch my legs. I'll get off and stroll with you. . . . Stand still, can't you?"

Keighley's horse was much perturbed by seeing the groom's horse go on alone; and, eager to rejoin a stable

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companion, it fidgeted, twisted, turned round and round.

"Stand still," and its rider administered a sharp jog in the mouth. "Stand still, you fool. Don't you hear?"

"Are you speaking to me, Lord Keighley?" And Kathleen, in spite of herself, began to laugh.

"No, no—of course not. . . . Now, steady."

With some difficulty he dismounted. Then, leading the horse, he walked by Miss Mallock's side; and the horse gave it up as a bad job, and meekly consented to be led away from its comrade and its stables.

"You never came out with the hounds this spring," said Keighley.

"No."

"They were up this way half a dozen times in March and April—quite handy meets."

He talked cheerily and pleasantly, as if taking it for granted that his company and conversation could not be otherwise than desirable; but she still spoke stiffly and coldly. She was sorry that she had been betrayed into the friendly freedom of laughter just now.

"They met twice at Clowston Ferry," he went on, "and once at my place. You ought to have come down and had a look at 'em."

"We don't hunt now. We have given it up."

"Oh, that's a pity." And he added as an after-thought: "How's your father?"

"Fairly well. Thank you."

"I don't see him about."

"No, he is too busy."

"Busy! What has he got to make him busy?"

"He is writing a book."

"Really! I didn't know he was in the literary line, . . . I say. If he wants books of reference, of

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course he can use my library. I shall be only too glad."

"Thank you, he gets books from London."

He walked with her for about a mile; and then stopped, pulled off his thick riding glove, and offered his hand.

"Good-night, Miss Mallock."

"Good-night," said Kathleen, and she shook hands with careful limpness.

"Do you often take your exercise in this direction? I mean, is this your favourite walk?"

"No, not particularly."

"Have you seen the blue-bells in the woods? They're quite pretty."

"Oh, no," she said, with the suspicion of a smile. "I respect your notice boards. I'm not a trespasser."

"But oh, I say. Those don't apply to *you*, or your friends;" and he spoke earnestly, as if this was a most serious matter. "I beg of you to go, whenever you please."

"Thank you," she said frigidly.

Then Keighley was about to remount. But the horse, turning its head towards home, immediately displayed excitement, gave a little neigh of delight, arched its back, swung round and round spritishly.

"Can't you stand still?" said Keighley, making somewhat clumsy efforts and vainly endeavouring to get into the saddle.

Kathleen had begun to smile again. She went to the horse's head, and held it.

"A thousand thanks."

Keighley was in the saddle now, but fishing without success for his right stirrup.

"Pray allow me," said Kathleen; and she put the

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iron on his foot. "Is there anything else I can do for you?" And she burst into gay laughter.

Keighley laughed jovially and noisily. "No, no. You have covered me with confusion—made me feel like some gouty old buster of seventy."

"Then good-night. I hope you'll manage the gates all right. But perhaps your groom will be there to help you."

"Oh, I'm safe when I'm once aboard. . . . Good-night."

Till she turned, he was looking down at her with smiling but critical attention—almost as if he had never properly seen her before. He had not perhaps till now observed the neat cut and style of her rough grey coat and skirt, and the mingled strength and gracefulness of the tall slim figure in these tailor-made garments; or the dark brown hair—such a lot of it—beneath the Tam-o'-Shanter cap; or the Irish eyes that she had inherited from her mother—grey eyes that deepened to full blue, and with dark lines underneath that seemed to have been marked by a black pencil.

To the annoyance of his fidgety horse, he remained at the same spot watching her until she had gone a couple of hundred yards up the track.

She did not look round. She felt angry with herself for laughing and chaffing in such a free-and-easy fashion. Lord Keighley must be well aware of his many sins of omission, and it would be best to let him understand that these sins had not been unnoticed. There was no necessity for any display of resentment; but, having failed to deserve friendship, he should be rigorously held in his position as a mere chance acquaintance.

They had first seen him out hunting. A scratch pack had recently been started in the dale country,

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and each autumn it opened its campaign among the woodlands and unenclosed skirts of the hills. Before the cub-hunting was over General Mallock and his daughters enjoyed several mornings spent with the music of hound and horn. They were gratified by the reception that Keighley gave them on their initial appearance. He introduced himself to the General, and was very pleasant: doing the honours of the hunt, courteously acting as pilot over ground familiar to him, but strange to them. Then one morning he rode back with them, had some luncheon at Long Moor House, and was altogether charming and agreeable—because he seemed the friend in need who is always a friend indeed.

The General seemed to like him—said he was a frank amiable fellow. Mollie said he was pompous, but quite a lamb; and added that she believed Kathleen had made a conquest. She foolishly pretended that, while her father was talking, the guest had sat with his head slightly on one side, looking at silent Kathleen with undisguised admiration. That of course was Mollie's childish nonsense, and Kathleen reproved her for speaking so sillily.

Then almost immediately Keighley left Redchurch and remained away a long time; and before he returned the General had given up hunting. He had sent a cheque to the hunt secretary, expressed a wish to be a regular subscriber, and asked for information as to fixtures, etc. The secretary, acknowledging the cheque, called it a donation, and did not answer the question about subscriptions and appointments. Perhaps the secretary meant nothing by this;—or perhaps he meant that the gentlemen of the dale did not desire General Mallock's society in the hunting field.

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General Mallock, telling Kathleen that they would not go out again, tried but failed to prevent her from seeing that his pride had been grievously wounded.

When Keighley reappeared, he was kind and friendly, but in too casual a way. And then the more Kathleen thought about him, the less she liked him. He was very tactless or very stupid—probably both. If he really meant to be kind, he ought to know that he hadn't been kind enough. He was pleased to consider himself the big man of the neighbourhood, the natural leader in all matters, whether political, agricultural, or social; and with very little trouble he could have made things ever so much easier for her father as a new-comer.

Another offence! For the last two winters his aunt, the Dowager Lady Keighley, had been keeping house for him; but she had never called on the Miss Mallocks. Kathleen had seen her once or twice—a portly, beaky old dame, swelling with dowdy grandeur as she drove along the moor roads in an absurdly old-fashioned barouche. The pompously pretentious carriage had slowly swept past the white gates of Long Moor House, instead of turning through them and coming up the gravel drive, as it ought to have done. Lord Keighley must be very stupid indeed, if he did not know that he should long since have sent the old frump to perform a duty the omission of which amounted to marked incivility.

VI

NEXT day was bright and fine; with a touch of summer in the air, gentle breezes creeping towards one across the heather, and white clouds racing high overhead—a day

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on which it seemed almost impossible to stay indoors. Nevertheless General Mallock refused to go out ; his task held him bound with invisible chains ; nothing could move him from the bureau in the inner room.

He did not look up, or answer, when Kathleen told him after luncheon that she was going for a walk.

"I won't be long, father. I'll be back before tea."

"Yes, my dear—yes."

She knew from the tone of his voice that he had not really heard what she said. His thoughts were thousands of miles away.

She went through the sunk lane, and then hesitated as if uncertain which way to turn. She did not feel disposed to avail herself of Lord Keighley's invitation, and pay a visit to the Redchurch woods. And yet the woods seemed to draw her southwards.

The clouds and the breeze decided her. They were both making for the south, and she went their way.

She had got as far as the first of the notice boards, and the woods lay smiling in the sunlight at her feet, when she saw a man tramping up the hill towards her. He was a sturdy block of a man in brown gaiters, with a long stick such as labourers carry ; and he looked more like one of the gamekeepers than the lordly owner of the land.

"How d'ye do ? I wondered if I should run up against you. Quite a jolly afternoon, isn't it ? "

And, without asking permission, Keighley condescendingly walked with Kathleen in the direction from which he had come.

"I'll show you the what d'ye call 'ems—the blue-bells and the primroses ; " and he pointed with his long stick towards the gate into the beech wood.

But Kathleen would not go as far as the gate. She

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presently glanced at the watch in the leather bracelet on her wrist, and then stopped short.

"Thank you, I haven't time to go any further."

"Very well," said Keighley turned about. "I'll walk back with you."

"Oh, don't let me take you out of your way again."

"No," he said, stolidly and seriously. "I want exercise. I ate too much at luncheon."

"But you shouldn't do that."

"I know I shouldn't," he said, still very seriously. "But one does, all the same. That's the worst of the country—nothing to do, and no one to talk to. Between you and me and the post, Miss Mallock—" and he said this with an air of the utmost importance, as if it was a concession to speak so unreservedly,— "I'm pretty sick of the country."

Then, as he tramped by her side, he continued to talk about his personal affairs. He wanted to get away, he told her, but he was detained up here in Yorkshire by all kinds of bothering business. Every day brought with it some fresh trouble—farm valuations for incoming tenants, surveyor's plans for rebuilding cottages, new drainage schemes: things that demanded his own care and that could not be delegated to others.

"I assure you, Miss Mallock, half my time I have to work as if I was some little solicitor or architect's clerk."

"But don't you think that work is good for people?"

"That may be. If you are working for yourself! But one gets uncommonly tired of working for others—and never getting any reward."

"The best work is never rewarded, Lord Keighley. And working for others is the best work that anyone can do."

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"I wonder," and he looked at her inquiringly. "D'you really think that? I used to think so. When my uncle died, and I first took over control, I made up my mind not to spare myself. I felt the sense of responsibility—the duties of my position, and so on. You know what I mean. I intended to fill the position properly."

"And aren't you filling it?"

He did not answer her, but stolidly went on with the exposition of his troubles.

"I never get any thanks. I never get any gratitude. I've done more for the tenants in the last five years than they'd had done for them in twenty years—and yet they grumble. It's a disappointment, and it worries me. I don't know if I'm too conscientious. My aunt says I ought to take things quieter. But I can't. I can't shake off the feeling that here I am—in a certain position, with all the responsibility that accompanies that position."

It was curious to hear him echoing this word; and Kathleen smiled inwardly. He spoke of his position with an oddly naïve explicitness, as if he considered it necessary for the argument to emphasize the fact that he was a peer as well as a landed proprietor. Somehow it did not sound snobbish or priggish, but merely characteristic.

"There are those quarries, for instance. The men bother me to do this, that, and the other—as if my only duty was to say yes to whatever I'm asked. Then these idiotic ignorant fools put their heads together, and make out I'm being hard on them."

"I hope you'll never be hard on them, Lord Keighley;" and Kathleen smiled at him frankly and amiably.

"Of course I shan't. I shall do what I think right

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and just by them—as I always have done. . . . You know, it's a thundering responsibility, that—to have such an enterprise to look after, with nearly two thousand men dependent on you for their daily bread."

Kathleen had remembered what little Mr. Donaldson said about the management of the quarries and the need of what he called "dipplummicity", in dealing with the men, and she eagerly jumped at this opportunity of urging gentle methods.

"Yes, quite so," said Keighley. "But Gilchrist—my manager—always tells me you must be firm with them. You must let 'em know that you are the master, and not they. If you let them get the upper hand, you always have the devil to pay."

"But perhaps Mr. Gilchrist is less tolerant than you yourself would be. Where you might only be firm, he may perhaps be harsh and overbearing."

"Oh, no, I don't think so. No, really, I don't think so. Gilchrist is a very fair-minded sensible fellow—and he knows his job inside out. He has been at it the best part of his life."

"I fancied that—"

He did not listen to her. He went on talking about the quarries, explaining that they were anything but remunerative; in fact they were almost more trouble than they were worth. It was therefore peculiarly annoying to him when people seemed to think that he was a greedy and rapacious exploiter of honest toil—growing fat and rich while unpaid slaves wore themselves out in his service.

"No," he concluded solemnly. "I do my best for everybody. You can't say more than that."

She noticed how, while expressing his own opinion, he completely disregarded all interruptions; but somehow she felt flattered by his insistence. He seemed

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obstinately determined to give her a full and confidential statement about himself, his views, and his aims in life.

"No, you can't say more than that, Lord Keighley."

"But I do say it—egotistical or not, I say it, because I mean it;" and he swished his brown gaiters with the thin end of the long stick, and laughed jovially. "I always mean what I say, and say what I mean."

Kathleen liked the jolly open manner with which he made this boast. Suddenly she felt that her first impression of him had been quite correct. Lord Keighley was really a good sort. Uninteresting perhaps, but kind and well-intentioned: a prosaic stolid man, whose natural obstinacy was tempered by an equally natural amiability.

"What did you tell me your father was up to?" he asked presently. "A book! Oh yes—of course. And he doesn't care to use my library. I wish I could be of any assistance. You know, I often think of him and you when I'm riding by here."

While they talked they had returned to the heath, and, bearing away to the high road, had left the track that led to Long Moor House.

"You and he," said Keighley, "must be awfully lonely—and that nice sister of yours. By the way, how is she? . . . You can't have a soul to talk to."

Kathleen was again looking at her watch bracelet, and a twinge of remorse brought an anxious and troubled expression to her face.

"Good-bye, Lord Keighley."

For more than an hour she had not thought of the book. Until Keighley spoke of it, she had forgotten its existence. This seemed like disloyalty to her father.

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"I say. Miss Mallock, before you run off—I want to take a liberty,—that is, ask a favour."

Then Lord Keighley, with a queer blending of shyness, abruptness and consequentiality, requested that the Mallock family would admit him to the usual privileges of accepted friendship. He would like to be allowed to drop in now and then quite informally, and have a talk with them all.

"You know what I mean. Come in to tea, if I'm passing—without being asked. Would it bore your father—or you and your sister? We're neighbours, anyhow—so we might just as well be neighbourly."

Kathleen thought that this overture came rather late in the day, and that, now it had come, it took a strangely inverted form. Here was Lord Keighley, who had committed so many sins of omission, calmly asking for attention and solicitude from those whom he had neglected. But how could she answer the appeal except by saying yes?

She said yes—doubtfully and hesitatingly. "Yes, I think that father would be glad to see you at tea-time. . . . But not to-day," she added hastily. "He is so very busy to-day."

"No, I couldn't come to-day. I'm busy too. I ought to be at home at this moment. I gave Gilchrist an appointment at four o'clock;" and Keighley laughed. "But I've enjoyed my chat with you a good deal more than I shall enjoy jawing with Mr. Gilchrist. . . . Good-night. And many thanks."

After this Keighley was a fairly frequent visitor at Long Moor House. O'Kelly used to come bustling into the General's room and announce, "'Tis Lord Keighley again—but his lordship says he'll just be going on if it's not convenient to ye to see him."

General Mallock readily consented to see the friendly

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neighbour ; he had taken to Lord Keighley ; he liked these unceremonious calls—although he often grumbled at the waste of time that they entailed.

And Kathleen was now quite satisfied with his lordship. If only he could have shown a little more tact, she would have thought him a most welcome and desirable companion for her father. But he occasionally failed, and failed badly, by saying stupid blundering things that no tactful person could possibly have addressed to the unfortunate commander of Andalkund.

He told the General about the dispute at the quarries. In spite of falling profits, higher wages were idiotically demanded ; and if he granted the request, he would be forced to dismiss fifty or a hundred men.

Kathleen again ventured to advise him to avoid anything like a row with his employees ; and the General supported her and echoed her words.

"Oh, yes," said Keighley. "I see what you mean. You think discretion is the better part of valour. A very good maxim ! But it mustn't be pushed too far, you know."

That was an oafish thing to say to General Mallock, and it made Kathleen frown and bite her lip.

Again, when they talked to the visitor about the book, he merely looked blank—and spoke heavily and dully.

"It'll be a ticklish experiment, won't it ? There are such a lot of these books of memoirs nowadays—It seems to me they're a bit overdone. My aunt gets two or three of 'em in every parcel from Mudies'."

And again he was tactless when the General spoke with enthusiasm about his rifle-range.

"I'm training all my servants, and they are doing finely—and if any of your lads would care to come up and join us, we'll soon knock them into shape."

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"Oh, I don't believe in those tin-pot little rifles," said Keighley. "I think the Territorial people are simply wasting money, with all their clubs and associations. There's what's-his-name—Colonel Vincent—over at Clowston—bothering for funds. I tell him he's making *toy* soldiers, not *real* soldiers."

These were occasions on which Lord Keighley altogether failed to please; but for the most part he proved very agreeable both to the General and Miss Kathleen, and his presence furnished a relief from the monotony and gloom of the long toilsome days.

One night he came to dinner; and as an evening guest he made himself especially pleasant. The dinner was quite a success. It seemed to Kathleen that with his white waistcoat and swallow-tail coat, he had put on a more polished manner and a courtier and grander air. In this ceremonious costume, moreover, he looked thinner, younger—really almost handsome. That appearance of the bluff, hearty gamekeeper was difficult to remember when she glanced across the table at my lord in his best clothes.

And instead of talking so much about himself, he drew talk from the General; he laughed at the smallest jokes; he said that some very old anecdotes were entirely new to him. When the gentlemen left the dinner table and joined their lady in the morning-room, she was quite sure that there had been no tactless blunder during her absence. Her father was in high spirits, quite happy and at ease with the guest.

Before the evening was over Kathleen sang some of those Irish melodies. This was her father's favourite music.

"They're the only songs I care about, Keighley. My poor wife used to sing them to me."

"May I turn the pages for you?" said Keighley,

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standing by the piano and looking down at the singer.

"No, thank you. I know them all by heart."

So Keighley retired to the hearth-rug, and, standing with his back to the empty grate, watched the singer from there; while General Mallock sat in his comfortable arm-chair, and, with hands clasped, mused, nodded, and presently dozed.

"Do go on," said Keighley, in a low voice. "That is, if it doesn't tire you."

"No, it doesn't tire me."

"Well, it doesn't tire me either. I like it."

And she sang one more song—*Far from the Land*—the prettiest of the Irish songs; and she sang it very prettily.

Then she turned, smiling. Keighley was standing with his head slightly on one side, looking at her reflectively.

She got up from the piano, faintly blushing. A thought had passed through her mind. This was what Mollie had described in such a silly way. Mollie would have said that this was his look of admiration.

"Father!"

"Don't wake him," whispered Keighley. "He is enjoying his forty winks."

But Kathleen woke her father.

"Thank you," said the General. "Thank you, dear. The only music I ever cared for."

VII

THE summer dragged slowly past, while the work continued without intermission.

Except for the visits of Lord Keighley and Dr.

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Bryant, there had not been an hour's distraction. Geoffrey spent his holidays with a private tutor at Eastbourne. Mollie had remained at York; but now, in September, she at last brought her stay to an end.

York had produced a wonderful change in Miss Mollie. She came back with all the airs and graces of a fashionable young lady, full of society chatter, and resolutely adopting the attitude of self-composure and self-satisfaction proper to one who is irrefutably grown-up. But beneath the outward affectations, she was as warm-hearted, affectionate, and childish as ever.

In the midst of an opening burst of prattle, she suddenly checked herself, flung her arms round Kathleen's neck, and hugged her with expansive warmth.

"Kathleen," she cried, "what a selfish beast I have been to leave you here all alone! It was horrid to be having such a good time, when you were slaving for father's sake—for all our sakes."

She was genuinely upset to see Kathleen looking so pale and care-worn.

"My poor old dear. It has been too much for you. Oh, I do feel a wretch."

But Kathleen said that she was very well, as strong as a horse, not the least the worse for her secretarial labours, and delighted to have her little sister home again.

"I must go back to father, now. He wants me between now and dinner. . . . But we'll have all the evening together, and then you shall tell me everything."

"Oh, my dear girl," said Mollie, resuming her grown-up society manner. "It would take me a week to tell you a *quarter* of what has happened."

However, much less than a week sufficed for the emptying of Mollie's news-bag—although the items

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were dragged out one by one, and each was dwelt upon at inordinate length. Truly nothing very tremendous seemed to have occurred. Yet, listening to the relation of her gaieties and excitements, one might have supposed that York was Paris, Vienna, or any other vast metropolis at the zenith of its seasonal glory. But just as a child who has never seen the pantomime at Drury Lane will be well content with the Christmas performance at the local theatre, so Mollie had been more than satisfied by her restricted experience. If the fare was scanty, it was her first banquet; and she took to it a hearty and unjaded appetite.

"Oh, Kath, I do dread the dullness and quiet here after the fun I've grown accustomed to."

Five dances in less than six months! Think of it. And not just sitting watching and pretending to talk to other neglected young ladies—but a plethora of partners, who nearly filled your programme days before the event, who were waiting at the doors for you, eagerly prancing up and down in their ardour, simply longing to lead you out to the sliding, slippery, swinging floor. And *such* partners! Not mere lumpish hunting-men, plethoric landlords, or insipid curates—but soldiers!

"Of course," said Mollie, sagely and impressively, "that's the beauty of a garrison city. Mrs. Grenville used to say it was a privilege one oughtn't to lose sight of. I'm sure I never did;" and she gave her old childish laugh, and then again became serious. "She meant that a girl has a chance of enjoying herself—when there are more dancing men than there are girls. She said York is nearly as good as India for that. Whereas in London it's dreadful. A London ball is simply a mockery."

The soldiers figured largely in the tale of joy. Think

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of it! Not the line regiment, but the mounted warriors. It would be impossible to exaggerate the splendour, the gallantry, the graceful courtesy of these Twelfth Hussars. Colonel Vaughan was a most magnificent officer, and the whole corps adored him; but indeed, from the Colonel down to the least senior of the second lieutenants, they were all perfect.

Kathleen soon noticed that when Mollie was talking of the soldiers one name recurred very frequently—not the name of the admirable colonel. A certain Mr. Richard Cartwright appeared unduly prominent in these regimental stories—especially when one learned that he was merely a lieutenant.

"Describe him to me, Mollie. What's he like?"

Mollie willingly described this most attractive young officer. He was really nice—fair-haired, jolly, amusing; perhaps rather too boyish, but quite serious in his professional ambitions.

"And," added Mollie, after a lengthy description, "he is *very* good-looking. I hadn't said that, had I?"

"No," said Kathleen, "you hadn't said it. But I had guessed it. . . . And who is he? Who are his people?"

Mollie gave a full description of Mr. Cartwright's family. His mother was a Lady Emily—descendant of a hundred earls—aristocratic, religious, not at all worldly-minded; a widow, living with her two daughters at a beautiful place near Pangbourne, close to the Thames, but not on it; the eldest son was in the Grenadier Guards, now stationed at Windsor. He was clever, scientific, original; but Richard was the favourite of the two charming sisters, Ethel and Sibyl.

"And what brought them all to York?" asked Kathleen. "The ball?"

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"Oh, none of them came to York," said Mollie simply.

"Then how is it that you know so much about them?"

"Oh, I *heard*, don't you know;" and Mollie looked sentimentally thoughtful. "He told me all about them, himself."

"Did he? . . . Mollie, that was very confidential of him. Did he volunteer such a lot of information, or did you ask for it?"

Mollie laughed.

"Don't be *inquisitive*, old girl. Don't ask questions, like Mrs. Grenville;" and she gave an imitation of the voice and manner of her hostess when conscientiously performing the duties of a chaperon. "'My dear child, one little word of advice'—Kath, that's *exactly* the way she talks: to the life, though I say it as shouldn't—" My dear Mollie, it is necessary for every young girl to discriminate between proper topics of conversation and those which are better avoided. Now tell me, my love, what you and your partner were discussing just now. What was it that provoked such mirth between you? "

She was so content with this imitation of a watchful chaperon that she often practised it; and Kathleen was nearly always amused by it.

Mollie had been surprised to find Lord Keighley not only pardoned for his varied remissness, but established now on the most friendly footing. She spoke of him as Lord Pomposo, and invented other uncomplimentary nicknames as appropriate to the visitor; but Kathleen, defending him, assured her sister that he was really all right—unquestionably well-meaning, completely good at heart.

"Well," said Mollie, "I'm glad we've found it out

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for certain. But it has taken us a long time, hasn't it?"

"Yes, I know. But directly we began to see more of him, we understood him better."

"And we do see plenty of him now, don't we?" said Mollie, with an outwardly demure air, but perhaps with inward mischievousness. "He marches in and out grandly—almost as if he had bought the house, and wanted to make sure that we were satisfactory tenants."

"Father likes him—and is cheered by seeing him. He has been very nice and attentive to father."

"Yes, Kath—how gratifying that is! He comes more often even than Dr. Bryant."

"No one," said Kathleen gratefully, "could have been kinder or more attentive than Dr. Bryant. He is sweet with father."

Miss Mollie smiled.

"There's nothing to laugh at, Mollie."

"No, of course there isn't. I just said that such a lot of attention is most gratifying. And it can't be *all* for father. *You* get some of it, Kath. . . . But I was thinking of Mrs. Grenville. I know exactly what she'd say;" and Mollie gave her little imitation. "A girl of your age cannot be too circumspect. Attentions from the other sex, the moment they become marked, should be reported to those old enough to judge of their correct interpretation."

Kathleen, however, was not now amused by the imitation. She told her sister not to talk nonsense, or attempt to be funny about the kindness of friends—about kindness that was as welcome as it had hitherto proved rare.

"Never mind," said Mollie. "My nonsense has given you quite a pretty colour. . . . Though you

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oughtn't to blush so easily, Kath. *I* never blush now. Mrs. Grenville says it's never done—it looks countrified." But then Mollie, suddenly contrite, apologized for ill-timed levity. "Dear old girl, don't be angry. Whatever you say, or think, or do, is always right. That's not chaff. I mean every word of it."

She made no further facetious comments on the neighbourly afternoon calls of Lord Keighley, until one day in November a most unexpected thing happened. This was a formal ceremonious call of his aunt.

Mollie was alone in the morning-room when O'Kelly opened the door and made his startling announcement.

"Lady Keighley—for Miss Kathleen."

"You are the younger Miss Mallock," said the old lady, speaking in a stiffly condescending tone. "I am glad to make your acquaintance;" and she shook hands.

"Won't you sit down," said Mollie, summoning her most grown-up air. "You have had a long drive."

"Thank you," said Lady Keighley, and she glanced about her. "This is a very comfortable room."

"I'm so glad you think so."

"Is it your drawing-room?"

"We call it our morning-room; but it is drawing-room—and everything else. There are not a great number of rooms."

"But you have an excellent hall. That is unusually large—and naturally it deprives you of space that otherwise could have been used for sitting-rooms."

"We often use the hall as a sitting-room," said Mollie.

"There is nothing nicer than a large hall," said Lady Keighley, with patronizing graciousness. "And I like this room too, Miss Mallock. I have never seen the house before."

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"No," said Mollie. Many additional phrases occurred to her—such as, "You ought to be ashamed to confess it." "Whose fault is that?" "And we haven't seen *your* house yet;"—but she said none of them.

"Ah," said Lady Keighley, as Kathleen appeared. "You are the elder Miss Mallock. I am very pleased to make your acquaintance."

It was a dull and boring visit; and though it did not last long, both the elder and the younger Miss Mallock were heartily glad when it came to an end.

Lady Keighley soon explained why after two years her barouche had wheeled in at the white gates, instead of passing them as usual. She was on the point of leaving for London, and thence she would proceed to Mentone, where she intended to spend the winter. But before turning her back on Yorkshire, she had felt that she would like to call and express her sense of obligation for the civilities received by Lord Keighley at Long Moor House.

"You and General Mallock have been so very kind to my nephew. I'm sure it is extremely kind of you to allow him to come here so frequently—and it has been a real resource to him. He has said so again and again."

And then she descended on her nephew's many virtues. She was as fond of him as if he had been a son instead of a nephew. He was so companionable, so good-natured, so considerate; and yet he had such lofty views, was so fully alive to the serious side of existence.

"His sense of duty, Miss Mallock, is extraordinarily high;" and Lady Keighley stared with almost wall-eyed intensity. "He has been working himself to death all this summer. I beg him to rest—but he will not listen to me, while he believes he hears the call of duty.

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He will not spare himself. However, I am in hope of getting him away soon. He ought to be more in London. I *want* to get him there—to shine, as I know he can shine, in a wider field than this."

And Lady Keighley sketched the career that would be traditionally correct for a nobleman of Keighley's weight and importance. He must be heard in the Lords; he must bulk large in the world of politics; he must be a cabinet minister, and help to govern the nation, instead of wasting himself on the management of farms and quarries.

"And it is all open to him. With his undoubted powers, Miss Mallock, he cannot fail."

But at last Lady Keighley confessed that her paragon had one bad fault. He was a confirmed bachelor—not a marrying man; although, considering his position and so on, that was precisely what he ought to have proved himself to be long before now.

"For he is getting on, Miss Mallock. Keighley will be thirty-five next birthday. When a man reaches his thirty-fifth birthday without—I won't say falling in love, but without showing the slightest inclination or preference,—well, one begins to think it is a hopeless case. . . . And indeed I very much fear Keighley *is* a hopeless case. Or if he ever does marry now, I suppose it will be purely an alliance of reason."

Then, after finishing her character sketch, she brought the visit to a conclusion; and solemnly deposited one of Lord Keighley's cards in the hall as she passed through it.

"What a disgusting old *beast!*" cried Mollie indignantly. "Oh, Kathleen, why weren't you rude to her? Or why wouldn't you let me be rude—instead of frowning at me? We oughtn't to have sat tamely listening to her."

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"Oh, I suppose she was trying to be polite."

"No, she wasn't," said Mollie, with great indignation.
"She was trying to be hateful, and she did more than try. She succeeded."

"I don't see that."

"Then it's because you won't see it. It was as plain as her ugly beak of a nose. Whatever *you* think about Lord Keighley's attentions, *she* is frightened about them. So the old cat came up to have a look at you—and to put you off, if she could. 'Ah. You are the elder Miss Mallock!' He has talked of you, of course. Every word she said about him—not marrying and the rest of it—was just to warn you that it was no use scheming to catch him."

"If I believed that," said Kathleen, coldly, and rather sadly, "I should be much more angry than you are;" and she went back to her interrupted type-writing.

Mollie came into her room at bed-time that evening, and, sitting on the edge of the bed, shyly pleaded for an interesting and delightful confidence.

"Kathleen!"

"Yes."

"I have got a secret, and I believe you have one too. I'll exchange mine for yours."

But Kathleen said that she had no secret to part with.

"Then I'll give you mine for nothing," said Mollie, playing with the ribbons of her dressing-gown and looking very sentimental. "I *am* rather fond of Mr. Cartwright—and of course I'm not sure, but I think he rather liked me. Anyhow, he was *attentive*. . . . No, we won't talk about it."

Kathleen was about to give some wise sisterly advice; her face had become serious; and she began to speak

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gravely. But Mollie stopped her with a laugh. She sprang lightly from the bed, and went to the door.

"Good-night, Kath. I only wanted you to know that perhaps *I* have made a little wee conquest—though I don't suppose anything will ever come of it. . . . I'm not a bit puffed up about it—because, you see, there were such opportunities. I had the whole of York ; " and she laughed mischievously. " But I think *you're* wonderful. Only two men within reach, and I do believe you have bowled over both of them."

VIII

DR. BRYANT had found an occasional companion to help him through his long evenings and save him from too much study. Donaldson, the nonconformist clergyman, took a habit of coming to smoke a pipe with " friend Bryant " after the day's work ; and really, although the two men were so dissimilar, something like a friendship arose between them.

Fussy Mr. Donaldson was interesting as a rather rare type of the religious enthusiast. Middle-aged, shabby, common, uneducated, appallingly officious, he seemed at first a ludicrous figure hurrying up and down the steep street of Ewesland. But then Bryant became conscious that this little man carried with him always a self-protective atmosphere of pride and dignity ; he genuinely believed himself an appointed servant of God ; he bustled and hurried because he thought that sloth or delay would be blameworthy in one who had been sent on a divine errand. And it was especially instructive for a psychological student to observe how, in the man's fairly capacious mind, the highest affairs of heaven and the most trivial affairs of

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earth were so completely mingled and bound together that the man himself had probably long since lost the power of differentiating them.

"My wife," he told Bryant once, "had an accident to-day," and he chuckled good-humouredly. "We were to have had a rabbit pie to our dinner; and she and our girl were so mighty busy with it, turn and turn about, that between them they made a mess of it. It was forgot in the oven. Bottom of pie dish burnt out; the good clean crust and savoury meat turned into dirty cinders. Impossible to put a tooth in it,—nothing else in the house,—no dinner! Mrs. Donaldson came to me crying fit to break her heart. But I only laughed, and bade her dry her eyes. What was it to me?"

"You took it philosophically," said Bryant, smiling.

"Friend, speak gently. 'Tis a little thing, dropped into life's deep well. And she's the best wife a man ever had. . . . But there's more going to this lost dinner. I thought to myself, somebody has had a finger in my pie. Who? And I thought, suppose it was *God's finger!*

"'Donaldson,' I said to myself, 'don't sit mooning here. Up and out.' I sallied forth, and the first man I met was a man struggling in darkness. That skinny carotty fellow, Tom Hollings! His faith was gone, doubt was shaking him; he told me to my face that my sermons had been going in at one ear and out of the other. Well, I took Tom up to the moor and wrestled with him."

"Metaphorically, I presume."

"Yes, I got him in the open—with nothing between us and God, except God's blue sky; and I never let go of him until I had put him to rights. We came back arm in arm, calm and happy—and he was as steadfast

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in his faith as I was myself. . . . Now, doctor, that was what I had been *meant* to do. Time was short—no time for dinner."

And it was all genuine. Ridiculous or not, Mr. Donaldson believed that the pie accident was a miraculous interposition.

He had the strong confident way of speaking that is proper to the enthusiastic temperament; but his manner sometimes changed quickly from excessive earnestness to a mildly deprecating appeal. Then he used to speak playfully and wheedlingly, as if begging a favour from a shy or obstinate child.

"That's my keynote in preaching," he told Bryant, "and in everything else, for the matter of that. Persuade, if you can't convince. When you can't use force, use diplomimacy. It is the key that opens hearts for me. Look at all these poor fellows—seeming so hard and coarse,—yes, and fierce even. But they're only children—in their hearts. And I treat them like children. I go bang through the rough outside straight to the child's heart that lays underneath."

There could be no doubt that Mr. Donaldson's influence, by whatever means he had secured it, was now solid and far-reaching. Bryant, when talking to his humble patients, had frequent testimony of the respectful deference paid by these ignorant men and women to the advice and admonitions of their minister. Everything that Mr. Donaldson said to them seemed to be carefully remembered; and, above all, his "pulpit words" were quoted as if unquestionably inspired utterances.

Once or twice Dr. Bryant went to hear the pulpit words himself; but what principally struck him was the immense quantity of the words. Miss Purvis had often invited him to make this Sunday excursion, and

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one summer evening she was good enough to escort him to the ugly chapel on the hill. Amiable commonplace Miss Purvis did not belong to the chapel fold, but the attraction of Mr. Donaldson's preaching made her desert the parish church.

"I'm so glad you could come," said Miss Purvis. "He is *stronger* and *fuller* at the second service than the first."

And indeed Mr. Donaldson was strong and full. He bellowed and raged; he wheedled and cajoled; he asked strings of questions, and rapped out answers to them in every possible tone of voice—and Dr. Bryant wondered if he would ever stop. But in all the crowded building Bryant was the only person who did not regret that the end of the sermon came at last. The rest of the congregation appeared sorry that it could not go on all night.

"There," said Miss Purvis, as they strolled downwards through the pleasant summer dusk, "I *am* so glad you've heard him, and quite at his best. He never was finer."

"I could see the close attention with which they all listened," said Dr. Bryant evasively.

"Who wouldn't listen to him?" said Miss Purvis. "He lifts one out of oneself. And the Vicar *never* does that."

Mr. Donaldson's discourse had really stirred her emotions. And Dr. Bryant, glancing at her, thought the more of the preacher's power for striking fire out of such very dull and heavy material.

Before they got to the bottom of the village, the preacher himself overtook them.

"Ha-ha," cried Donaldson cheerily. "Friend Bryant—and Miss Purvis. Peace—Sunday's peace to both of you."

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Miss Purvis gave him lavish praise for his "eloquent oration," but little Donaldson gently refused to accept any compliments.

"Nay, nay. Heart talking to heart—nothing else. How can I be eloquent? I lack all the gifts that make an orator. I have no education—I'm almost as unlettered as my hearers."

"Oh, how can you say so, Mr. Donaldson?"

"I do say so. But what does it matter? I serve my purpose. I am merely an instrument—a rough instrument chosen for rough work;" and, shading his eyes with a hand, he looked keenly at Dr. Bryant. "It's getting so dark that I can scarce see your face." Then he laughed, and turned to the young lady again. "Here by your side while you praise me, Miss Purvis; is someone who keeps silence."

"I was much impressed," said Bryant politely.

"Nay, nay. Dr. Bryant has enjoyed a liberal education; he possesses critical judgment; he *knows*. . . . Good-night;" and the little man hurried on.

But Bryant had a greatly increased estimate of his shrewdness and penetration after this parting speech.

"He is so modest," said Miss Purvis. "Though, of course, he couldn't say too much about *your* cleverness, I'm quite sure. . . . Won't you come in to supper? Mother would be very pleased."

They had reached the closely shuttered grocer's shop, and in the rooms upstairs old Mrs. Purvis was anxiously waiting for her supper.

"Thank you—you are very kind, but I have some work to do."

"Oh, do come in," said Miss Purvis, pleadingly. "What would Mr. Donaldson say? Work on Sunday! He said Sunday peace."

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Nevertheless Dr. Bryant resisted the pressing invitation, and went over the road to his solitary meal.

Donaldson, smoking a blackened briar pipe and sitting at ease in one of Bryant's two armchairs, used to express gloomy views about the imminiate welfare of a certain portion of his flock. Fifty or sixty of the quarrymen were threatened with dismissal.

"Fifty bread-winners thrown out of work," said Donaldson sadly. "That'll be a bad beginning to the winter. And if I read all the signs correctly, there'll be worse to follow before the winter's over."

It appeared that the dispute as to the rates of wages had resulted in an impasse ; the bulk of the men would not withdraw from their demand for higher pay ; and their employer firmly adhered to his decision not to grant the increase without reducing the number of hands.

"How can sorrow be averted in such circumstances ?" said Donaldson. "On one side you have men fighting for stern facts, on the other side a man fighting for an idea. Lord Keighley is puffed up with pride—the worst sort of pride, bred into his bones. 'My word is law'—That's his notion. 'When I have once said a thing, it is carved in granite. It must stand for all time.' That's what he thinks. But what is he really? Why, just a dummy figure set up by his manager. Gilchrist is the *real* lord and ruler. It is Gilchrist who will be to blame for all the mischief that I believe is surely coming."

Then, one evening in October, Donaldson told the doctor that the blow had fallen. Work on the second plane of the Lesser Kirkwell quarry had been abandoned ; the cutting and shaping sheds were shut and

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locked ; fifty-three men had lost their employment.

" I come to you with a heavy heart, friend Bryant. . . . Thank you. This is my first whiff of tobacco since morning. . . . All day long I've been listening to ugly sounds—cries and lamentations of wives and daughters, angry despairing voices of husbands and brothers. I wonder if Mr. Gilchrist will hear them in his dreams."

There was bitter resentment against Mr. Gilchrist. The men, it seemed, were mostly of Donaldson's opinion ; they considered their ostensible master as a figure-head ; it was the servant, and not the lord, that they regarded as their oppressive enemy.

Bryant, coming home one afternoon, saw a crowd assembled above the middle quarry, and learned at night from Donaldson that there had been a mass meeting of all hands from the three quarries.

" I wasn't there," said Donaldson. " But by all accounts the talk ran high. One or two hot spirits are for calling out every man."

" On strike ? "

" Yes—to support the fifty-three. But their Union will never let them do that. From the Union's point of view, they have won a victory. They have got what they asked for—and the few must suffer patiently, if the many have gained."

Nevertheless to Donaldson's mind there was trouble and danger ahead. The Trade Union might not prove strong enough to control the actions of its members.

" There are some firebrands on the hill," said Mr. Donaldson forebodingly. " There's a man named McGaher. Have you chanced to come across him ? "

" No, I don't think so."

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"He's a Liverpool Irishman—and you know, when an Irishman turns English and forsakes the emerald isle, there's one thing he never leavess behind him. And that's his native love of agitation. McGaher took a lead in the speechifying to-day—and if they go on listening to *him*, they'll soon snap their fingers at the Union. . . . But," said Donaldson, with sudden cheerfulness, "it's no good crying out before we're hurt. My wife chid me for my long face over the tea-table."

And then he launched into a panegyric of Mrs. Donaldson—best of wives, truest of friends, sweetest of companions in joy and grief for twenty long years. While he talked, Bryant was thinking of the impression produced upon him, as an impartial stranger, by a first sight of Mrs. Donaldson sickening for influenza—a sharp-featured, shrewish-voiced patient, with wisps of grey hair straggling from beneath a brown flannel night-cap. But that of course was Mrs. Donaldson at her worst.

"A happy marriage," said her devoted husband, "is a great thing for a man. It's a marvellous bond—God's holy matrimony! . . . Have *you* any plans to that end?"

"I? Oh, no," said Bryant. "A wife is a luxury to which I can't aspire."

"Is that so?" And Donaldson, looking hard at him, continued in a slyly playful tone. "Then, young man, be careful. Fine fascinating fellows like you can be a shade too assiduous;" and he chuckled.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, there's an attractive young woman living not a hundred miles from here who, I fancy, has a soft spot in her bosom for the talented medico."

Dr. Bryant flushed hotly; and Mr. Donaldson chuckled shrewdly.

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" Ah-ha ! I needn't mention her name."

" No," said Bryant, " please don't."

" And yet why not ? I speak of her in kindness. I have a high opinion of Miss Purvis."

" Miss Purvis ! "

Dr. Bryant, summoning all his dignity, found that only a rather unreasonable anger came in its place. He roundly reproved Mr. Donaldson for an impertinence, warned him against officiousness and meddlesome prying, and forbade him ever to repeat so idiotic a suggestion.

The little man, flabbergasted by the result of his indiscretion, bore this sharp reproof with becoming and christianlike meekness. He promised never to offend again ; and, the evening pipe having now lost its relish, he soon took his leave.

" Good-night, friend Bryant. Believe me, I spoke but in kindness—kindness to both parties."

" Oh, that's all right," said Bryant. " Good-night to you—if you must be going."

Alone, by the fireside, he frowned, shrugged his shoulders, stared angrily at the red coals. It had strangely irritated him to discover that anyone could consider Miss Purvis a suitable, even a possible sweetheart for him. Surely Donaldson must be a consummate little ass !

He thought of the young woman—of her plebeian rank and environment, of her commonplace appearance, absolutely devoid of charm, merely offering one's eye the blonde insignificance of a good-natured housemaid.

And then he thought of someone so infinitely different from her. In imagination he could see, could not help seeing, this other figure. She was dark, pale, splendid —perhaps most splendid because quite unattainable.

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All her surroundings were charming and interesting ; she belonged to gracious well-bred people ; her place was in another world than his. And he thought of the sort of husband that a girl like that ought naturally to have. . . . Perhaps Kathleen Mallock's family might agree with Donaldson. Perhaps they too would consider that the village doctor should look for a wife over the nearest grocer's shop.

A dreadful heaviness descended on him each time that he thought of Miss Purvis—drab-hued monotony, no light or colour in one's life, unending triteness. But there is no romance nowadays, except in novels. And echoes of rubbishy sentimental railway novels came floating into his mind. Instead of rousing himself to read a substantial text-book, he dropped into one of his musing dreams. . . .

It is the humble suitor who is finally chosen from the glittering throng of proud pretenders. Innate worth, rather than the adventitious aids of birth and fortune, triumphs at the end. . . .

. . . "I wish it was Leap Year," said the Lady Isobel.

"Do you ? May I ask why ?"

"Can't you *guess* why ?"

"In her beautiful eyes there was a light that he could not mistake ; and it thrilled and intoxicated him.

"The shapely neck drooped, the lovely eyes were lowered, and the words came in a whisper from her carmine lips : ' If it was Leap Year I could propose to you—and it seems you *won't* propose to me.'

"Isobel ! I didn't dare.'

"'I know,' she murmured softly, 'but——'

"He waited to hear no more. With a rapturous cry, he had clasped her to his breast" . . .

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Foolish, foolish novels. Yet no more foolish than half one's waking dreams.

He got up, stretched himself, yawned; and then went heavily to bed.

That night Dr. Bryant was violently startled from his sleep.

He sat up in bed listening. The bell rang loudly; someone beat upon the surgery door panels; a woman's voice was calling for help. In a moment he had opened his window and was looking down into the moonlit street.

"Doctor, doctor. Help. For the love of mercy, come and help us. Help."

"Yes, I'm coming. What is it?"

There were two women with shawls over their heads just beneath the window, and a man was banging with his fist against the surgery door. At the sound of Bryant's voice the women raised white, terrified faces, and the man, slipping from the moonlight into the shadow of the wall, disappeared.

"It's my lad dying. My lad's near killed—if he isn't killed already."

"Where is he?"

"They're bringing him up the hill. They're carrying him home. Oh, save his life, doctor. Save my lad's life."

"There," cried the other woman, pointing with a shaky hand. "They're coming. Be quick, doctor."

Bryant, leaning out of the window, looked down the street towards the churchyard, and saw a strange procession approaching—perhaps a dozen men, but seeming more numerous, very slowly carrying a hurdle with a motionless figure stretched upon it.

Bryant scrambled into some clothes, roused his house-

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keeper, ran downstairs, lit the gas in the surgery, and opened his door.

"Now then! But—good heavens—what's this?"

Dr. Bryant, standing on his threshold, stared in amazement at the group outside the door.

"He has been shot, sir."

"He has bled summut dreadful."

"We couldn't nohow stop the bleeding."

They were quarrymen, but each had blackened his face; several had hung metal pots and pans round their necks; and one of them wore a rough head-dress of feathers and dangling straw—as they pressed forward to the doorway and the gas-light fell upon the black faces, glowing eyes, and gesticulating arms, they looked like a band of fierce wild savages.

"'Twas nobbut a joke," growled one of the men.

"Jest an innocent joke," said the man with the feathers, "till it turned to murder."

"We'll bring him to you, sir."

They were tender and careful enough in their handling of the injured man, while they lifted him from the hurdle, carried him through the doorway, and laid him on the couch in the surgery; and they spoke humbly and respectfully to Bryant, but at the sight of them his housekeeper uttered a shriek of terror and fled.

"How did this happen?" asked the doctor, stooping over the couch and examining the sooty-faced sufferer.

"He has been shot, sir."

"Yes, but who shot him?"

No one answered. One of the women had dropped on her knees by the couch, and was sobbing piteously. The other woman stood near, rocking her body, wringing her hands, and moaning.

There was a bullet wound in the man's left shoulder,

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and another in his right arm, which was broken below the elbow ; and from both wounds the blood was still freely oozing. Delicately and skilfully, Dr. Bryant completed his preliminary examination and began to dress and bandage the wounds. While busy at his work, he continued to ask questions.

"Who is he?"

"Denham. . . . Sam Denham, sir. . . . Denham." Half a dozen voices answered this question.

"Where's his home?"

"Up to Kirkwell Lane Cottages, sir."

"Well, he can't be moved. He must stay here. Who are you? His wife?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, sir, she's his wife. And that's her sister."

"Why don't you tell me how it happened?"

Again there was a dead silence. Then the wife looked up at him with streaming eyes.

"I dursn't, sir; and they willunt."

"Who says we daren't? I'll tell you, sir." The man with the feathers had spoken, noisily and fiercely. "It was that bloody murthering toirant Gilchrist that shot the poor lad—and the devil's curse loight on him."

"Mr. Gilchrist! How? Why?" Dr. Bryant had turned from the couch, and was staring incredulously.

"I tuk them down in all innocence," said the feathered man, "to give the toirant a moonlight dance round and about his house—just to tinkle the empty pots, and sing him a song of our empty bellies."

"Nobbut a joke," repeated another man.

"But the cruel toirant flings wide a window, and widout a word said, he bangs at us wid his guns and revolvers."

"Very well," said Bryant firmly, "now you can all

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of you clear out. D'you hear? His wife may stay—and her sister, if she wishes."

"All right, sir. . . . But can't none of us help you? . . . Is there nowt we can do?"

"No. Any help I want these women can give me."

"But is he dyin', sir?"

"No—I hope not."

One by one the blackened faces turned away; silently the men went out through the open doorway, and like ugly ghosts passed up the moonlit street.

Bryant shut the door behind the last of them, and came back to the couch.

"Now don't lose hope," he said gently and kindly. "Your husband is, of course, in great danger—but I hope, I believe he will recover. I'm going to make up a dose for him now, and then we'll arrange him more comfortably. . . . Here, take this chair. Get up off the floor, and sit by him. . . . And now we're by ourselves, will one of you tell me all about it?"

The women readily told their story of this queer midnight masquerade, while its unlucky victim lay feebly groaning, restlessly moving his sound arm, and staring at the unfamiliar room with dazed and dim eyes. Pain and loss of blood had reduced him to a state of semi-unconsciousness.

"It was McGaher," said his wife, "who planned it, sir."

"McGaher, I suppose, is that noisy one—the one who'd stuck feathers on his head?"

"Yes, sir. I prayed ma man not to go, but he wodn't hearken. He was fearfu' of the job hisseln—but nowt would stop him taking his part."

"So then," said the sister, "when they'd started down to Mr. Gilchrist's house, Nell and I followed."

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"They made across the fields," said the wife, "an' we came down along th' road. We heard the firing—but it was all ower and done before we got there."

"They war bearing her man away for dead, sir—an' they sent us wi' another chap, running to call you. They wudn't let her bide wi' her man an' p'raps see him die on th' road."

Her man was still alive when the day dawned, and Bryant was beginning to feel sure that he would be able to keep him alive.

IX

LONG MOOR HOUSE saw no more of Lord Keighley for a considerable time. He was too busy to pay afternoon calls. The cares and anxieties of a large employer who suddenly finds himself on the worst possible terms with hundreds of employees lay heavy on his broad shoulders.

There had been tremendous excitement in Beviston when Mr. Gilchrist appeared before the magistrates, charged with shooting and intending grievously to harm Samuel Denham, a slate-cutter. The proceedings, it was thought, were purely formal. Mr. Gilchrist's acts were justified by the circumstances; in the middle of the night a dozen men had come to his house, yelling horrible threats; and he, simply obeying the natural instinct for self-defence, had fired two or three warning shots with a revolver. Moreover, the wounded man was rapidly getting well again; soon he would be little worse for the sharp lesson that he had received. Nevertheless, after two adjournments Mr. Gilchrist was committed for trial, bail being accepted.

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At the assizes he would certainly be acquitted ; and then he would be able to resume the management of the quarries, which temporarily were in the sole charge of their owner. Mr. Gilchrist himself had thought it advisable to retire from Ewesland until a judge and jury should have publicly exonerated him.

"And I wish," said Dr. Bryant, when speaking of these events to Miss Mallock and the General, "that Lord Keighley could be persuaded to part with Gilchrist altogether. The men will never work under him contentedly after this."

Whatever magistrates, judges, and juries might say about it, the men would never alter their opinion that it was a murderous cruel thing to cut short a frolicsome demonstration with revolver bullets.

The dismissed quarrymen—widely known now as the Fifty-three—did not again black their faces and demonstrate at night ; but, in normal guise and by broad daylight, they allowed Bevistown to see far too much of them. On Saturday afternoons they marched down from the hill, gathering sympathetic followers all the way ; paraded the streets of the town with floating banners and jingling money-boxes ; stood like a dusty and forlorn regiment in the market-place ; sang songs, made speeches, and generally interfered with the peace and comfort of the shopkeepers and their week-end customers.

Unluckily, too, there were numerous unemployed in the town itself. The Bevistown cloth mills had recently discharged many hands. Trade was bad, work was slack, one large factory had closed its doors for good and all. Thus it happened that the quarrymen and town hands made common cause in their misfortune, joined forces occasionally, and mustered a parade of double strength.

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One afternoon, the crowd, swelling out of the market-place and half-filling Bridge Street, was unusually noisy—and from mere noise passed to turbulence. The few representatives of the local police, vainly striving to keep order, were rather roughly handled; and in the excited pressings and pushings, while the mob surged to and fro, somebody's banner pole smashed through the plate-glass of a shop-front. This catastrophe upset the honest but timorous tradesmen; some pallid assistant behind the rampart of his counter raised a cry that the mob were sacking the shops; within five minutes nearly every shop, not only in Bridge Street but throughout the town, had put up all the shutters and bars that it possessed.

Nor did Bevistown alone bear the brunt of these troublesome demonstrations. It occurred to somebody that a meet of hounds offered a good opportunity for demonstrating, and the gentlemen and ladies who came to the advertised appointment on Clowston village green were worried and pestered by the money-box people. A week later, when the meet was at Howley Gate, a rabble of unemployed boldly joined in the day's sport and completely spoilt it. They pervaded the wood that hounds were drawing; filled the air with hoots, shouts, and cat-calls; sprang upon banks and terrified horses; scampered along the lanes, derisively cheering, when at last the master gave it up as a bad job and withdrew with his hounds and his field at a hand-gallop. After that day hunting in the upper part of the vale was not again attempted.

But for Dr. Bryant, the Mallocks would have heard little or nothing of all the trouble and excitement; but he faithfully brought them local news from time to time. Mollie was always eager for news, and showed much more interest than her father or sister.

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"I am sure," said Kathleen, "that Lord Keighley can't be to blame. I *know* he means well to everybody."

"Yes," said Bryant, "I believe he does; but I think that he is very badly advised."

And he went on to tell them that while the wounded man was still lying at his house and being frequently visited by comrades and friends, there had been many chances of seeing "behind the scenes."

"Behind what scenes?" asked Miss Mollie childishly.

"I mean, I got glimpses of the men's way of thinking—of their sentiments and feelings. And honestly I think that Lord Keighley is taking too high a tone."

"Do you?" said Kathleen, doubtfully and coldly.

"Yes, he doesn't understand the situation."

"Doesn't he?" said Kathleen, more coldly still.

"He talks too big. It is always a mistake to speak of repressive measures before they are really needed. The other day at Bevistown he said that he wanted to get a cavalry regiment from York."

Mollie jumped up and clapped her hands.

"Oh," she cried excitedly, "that's a magnificent idea. That's the very thing he ought to do—and the sooner the better."

During this month of December—so noisy in the town, so quiet on the moor—General Mallock's *magnum opus* was rapidly approaching its completion. The book was finished, so far as the author was concerned; and the secretary was winding up the task.

It had come to the final typewriting now, and Kathleen worked early and late. There were dark circles round her eyes; she looked pallid, almost haggard; at night she was too tired to sleep, and when she fitfully dozed she dreamed that she could hear the click and

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rattle of the typewriting machine. And General Mallock unconsciously was driving her to increased efforts. From the moment that his own part of the work was over, he became in a fever of haste to get the completed copy ready for the publishers.

He intended to carry it off to London, ascertain which was the very best publishing firm, and without an hour's delay submit it for perusal. He would go alone. Nothing could persuade him to take his daughters with him.

Finished at last—each of the twenty chapters separate, with a buff cover of its own, the pages bound into the case with blue silk ribbon, and two pretty bows for outward decoration ! Mollie looked at it with pious reverence. To her it was the wonderful portentous treatise that would vindicate father and make things jolly for everybody.

To Kathleen, it had ceased to be a book. It was simply a monument of colossal labour, and she looked with a workman's honest pride at the neat typing and well-trimmed covers. It was difficult not to think that the world at large would receive it in this form—blue bows and all.

General Mallock started for London next day. It was a cold but bright morning, and the two girls drove with him to Bevistown railway station, where he was to catch the noon express.

The horses were fresh, and they swung the big wagonette along the sound moor road at a fine spanking pace ; but they could not go fast enough to satisfy the General. He was fidgety and nervous, seeming to wish that he could fly straight to his goal, looking at his watch half a dozen times in the first two miles, and apprehensively murmuring that trains wait for no man.

Then a quite groundless alarm seized him.

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"Frederick," he called to the footman, "I don't see my valise. You've left the valise behind."

Richards the coachman pulled up his horses; Frederick the footman stammered confusedly; the panic communicated itself to everybody in the wagonette. Then Kathleen, frantically groping beneath the seats, discovered the valise safely stowed away behind her father's legs. It would have been too terrible if they had left the old leather valise behind them—because the valise contained the book.

"Then drive on," said the General. "And, Richards, shove them along now. We have wasted time."

"Plenty of time, sir," said Richards.

"Only forty-one minutes," said the General, again looking at his watch.

"Ample time, sir."

"Five miles! Fully five miles."

The General was not easy in his mind until they were bowling down the last long slope into Bevistown. With a clear view of the black roofs, the two towers of the minster church, and the bridge that leads one into High Street, he began to feel safe.

"We're all right, now," he said smiling, and he patted Kathleen's knee. "All right now, my dear."

But, alas, they were not all right yet. Twenty minutes in hand, and only half a mile now from the railway station; but some more nervous excitement to be lived through before they got there.

Richards trotted the horses gaily up High Street, turned them carefully into the market-place, checked them to a walk, and then was forced to stop them. It was not market day, but the square was full of people—ugly banners borne aloft, money-boxes jingling, harsh voices shouting,—a large morning demonstration of the unemployed.

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A policeman with difficulty worked his way to the wagonette door.

" You won't be able to pass, sir. You'd better turn round and go back by George Street."

But already it was too late to turn round—no space for the horses to turn in; men pressing close to them on either side; more men with a banner coming up behind the carriage, blocking it from any avenue of extrication. The wagonette, caught and held in the thick of this rough-looking crowd, swayed and lurched, but could not advance or retire. And the horses, frightened by the noise and pressure, snorted, trembled, began to plunge desperately.

General Mallock was standing up in the carriage, holding to the rail of the coachman's box, while Kathleen and Mollie hugged his knees to prevent him from pitching out.

" Can't you make them give us room ? " Kathleen asked the policeman.

" How can I, miss ? " said the policeman. " It's as much as I can do to keep on ma feet." And indeed he was using the wagonette door as a support. " Now steady there—steady. Not so much shoving."

Suddenly General Mallock raised his voice to its loudest possible pitch.

" Let me pass, my lads. I'm in a hurry—to catch a train. Most important business. . . . I say, don't any of you know me? Surely I've got some friends among you chaps. . . . Come, lads, let me pass."

Then there came an answering shout from a man at a little distance.

" So tha shall, sir;" and this humble ally went bellowing and struggling forward to the horse's heads.

" It's th' ould General—to catch his train. Let th' ould General get through, somehow."

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And, as the shout was taken up and echoed, the men opened their ranks, the carriage slowly moved on.

"Th' ould General! Tes th' ould General. . . . So—so. Gently, ma beauties." Men were running beside the still frightened horses, men were cheering boisterously as they dodged the wheels, men were treading on each other's toes—but somehow the way was opened, and the horses went prancing on.

"Thank you. . . . Thank you. . . . Many thanks." General Mallock was taking off his hat to right and to left, bowing to the mob with a most dignified princely air. "I am greatly obliged. Thank you, my good lads ;" and then the carriage was free, and the horses drew it swiftly away.

Plenty of time at the railway station after all. General Mallock, waiting on the platform, and keeping a watchful eye on Frederick with the precious valise, said he felt touched by the consideration and kindness of all those rough men.

"It was pleasant, wasn't it, Kathleen? They did it so nicely and promptly. Really it was touching. It seemed as though, knowing one, they were quite fond of one."

"Everyone who *knows* you, father," said Kathleen proudly, "is fond of you."

She clung to his hand, when he had entered the train and was leaning out of the window of the compartment to bid them good-bye.

"Good luck, father. Take care of yourself—and write to us often."

"Yes, yes. God bless you both. I dare say I shall soon fix up everything. Of course my great anxiety is to secure people of the highest repute, and to get the book published without an hour's avoidable delay. . . . Good-bye."

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The train was moving, he was waving his hand. Kathleen ran along the platform to see the last glimpse of him—a tall, dignified figure wrapped in a grey cloak, looking like Don Quixote setting out to meet the windmills.

X

THE book had gone, and it was as if a dead weight had been lifted and one could breathe and move freely once again. Kathleen was ashamed to acknowledge to herself the sensations of immense relief. The house seemed to have more light in it, more air, more space; the wintry sunshine streaming through the windows of General Mallock's room flashed into the darkest recesses, chasing away the shadows, making the pattern show clean and fresh on the faded carpet; and the dim old bureau looked as though it had been given a new coat of varnish.

Laughter of happy voices issued from the servants' offices; O'Kelly told humorous anecdotes to a delighted audience in the pantry; Mollie sang shrilly and gaily as she scampered up and down stairs. Kathleen walked about the garden with strong easy footsteps. The colour returned to her face; she ate heartily; she slept deeply.

Then, three days after General Mallock's departure, Geoffrey came home for his Christmas holidays, and the house became brighter, gayer, noisier still.

There was nothing about which one need worry. Father had arrived safely in London. He wrote cheerfully—had attacked his business with good spirits,—promised to be back well before Christmas-day.

The wagonette was brought out again to fetch Mr.

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Geoffrey, and his sisters went down to meet him at Bevistown station. This afternoon one could scarcely recognize the town as the same place—it seemed so graceful, contented, and prosperous. No stupid processions to interfere with trade or traffic—the minster bells ringing joyously; bright-coloured stalls in the market-place, a new flag hung out above the porch of the Keighley Arms Hotel, butchers' shops decorated with holly and paper festoons; and everywhere business and life, men and women jovially occupied by the happy task of Christmas shopping. Not a sign of want, hunger, or angry resentment.

Geoffrey's first questions were about the book. Before he would speak of anything else, before he would see that Frederick had identified his boxes among the pile of luggage on the platform, he demanded explicit information as to the book.

"Has he done it all right?"

"Yes," said Kathleen confidently.

"Not too long-winded?"

"No, I don't think so."

"But has he made it so that any ass can understand—and not keep it all in the clouds?"

"No," said Kathleen, hesitating for a moment and then speaking with even greater confidence than before. "He has done it magnificently."

"Bravo," cried Geoffrey.

"But Kathleen nearly killed herself," said Mollie, "in helping him do it."

Geoffrey darted away to find his boxes, and he came back laughing and chaffing with Frederick and a porter.

And all the way home, up the long hills and over the dusky grey moor, there was laughter and chatter in the wagonette.

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" You *have* grown this time, Geoff. You can't deny it. You're simply enormous."

Mollie, of course, babbled freely of her society experiences.

" Geoff, I did have such a lovely time in York. Five dances! The soldiers' ball was the best. We had a photograph taken by magnesium light. I'll show it to you—and photographs in newspapers, too."

" Mollie won't forget her town gaffeties," said Kathleen tolerantly. " She can't support the simple life, and country pleasures."

" Oh, it *is* so dull—so lonely—and so much too of it ; " and Mollie, drawing her fur boa closer, and shivering affectedly, pointed at the long straight road and the vague expanse of heather.

" Well, it does seem precious lonely," said her brother, " when you come back to it. Always makes me think of Macbeth's blasted heath."

" Don't swear, Geoff," said Mollie. " Swearing's out of fashion. They don't do it in the crack regiments—not even the colonels."

" I see that Mollie is illiterate as ever."

" Yes," said Kathleen. " But isn't she fashionable?"

The house gave Geoffrey a livelier welcome to-night than at any previous home-coming. O'Kelly was quite irrepressible ; and the women-servants showed smiling faces at the baize door in the hall, and leaned over the balustrade of the gallery at the top of the stairs to catch a glimpse of the handsome young master.

" How are you all ? " said Geoffrey. " Glad to see you all again."

" And we're glad to see you, sir," said the maids shyly.

" Ye'll put heart into us for Christmas," said O'Kelly ; " and that'll save us the indigestion after our turkey and pudden."

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When he brought in the tea-pot, he announced that the cook sent her compliments and begged Mr. Geoffrey not to spoil his appetite for dinner.

"Cook has set her best leg forramost wid the menooy, sir—and 't will be a pity if ye can't do her justice."

"I'll be ready for her," said Geoffrey; "but I must have a go at these Yorkshire cakes. Nearly a year since I've had one."

He and his sisters, at tea, at dinner, and throughout the evening, were as happy and light-hearted as three quite young children released from the supervision of nurse or governess. It was holiday time, and the jolly Christmas feeling floated in the air—everything that one spoke of seemed a joke, nothing that one could think of had gloom or doubt in it.

The girls told their brother how politely the Bevis-town demonstrators had made room for the carriage.

"Ripping! And you say the governor was bucked up by it."

"Rather," said Mollie. "You should have seen him bowing to them. They gave him three cheers, Geoff."

And Kathleen laughed at this little episode now, although it had seemed a most serious pathetically significant affair when it happened. To Geoffrey all the news about the quarry dispute seemed enlivening and amusing.

"Tell us some more. How did it begin?"

"You heard that Mr. Gilchrist shot a man?"

"Yes, what a rotten thing to do!"

"And he's to be tried—but of course he'll get off; and then Lord Keighley means to put him back at the quarries."

"And then," said Mollie, "Dr. Bryant says there'll very likely be a strike."

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" You know," said Kathleen, " they asked for higher wages, and Lord Keighley granted them."

" But if so, what's the row about ? "

" He had to turn off fifty-three men," Kathleen explained, " or he couldn't have afforded to pay the higher wages to the others. He is running things almost at a loss now."

" Is he ? "

" And, Geoff," said Mollie, " in revenge they've stopped the hunting. They come out with pots and pans, yelling and roaring——"

" But where are the police ? "

" The police," said Kathleen, " are duffers. We saw them being pushed about the other day—they were helpless. There has been talk of a regiment coming."

" Talk of *my* regiment coming," said Mollie excitedly.

" *Your* regiment ? "

" The Twelfth Hussars," said Kathleen. " Popularly supposed to be commanded by Colonel Vaughan, C.B., but really controlled and maintained by Lieutenant Richard Cartwright."

" What does that mean ? "

" It only means that Mollie danced twice with a pair of Hessian boots and a sabretache, and pretends to have fallen in love with them."

" I danced *four* times with them ; " and Mollie, jumping up, hurried across the room. " Geoff, I'll show you his picture. . . . There ! " She had fetched her jealously treasured copy of an illustrated newspaper, and she opened it on Geoffrey's knees and pointed triumphantly. " There ! The fourth from the end. That one ! . . . Isn't he ather sweet ? "

" He looks to me a silly conceited ass."

" He's nothing of the sort ; " and Mollie abruptly

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closed the newspaper, and snatched it away. "He's very well connected too."

"Then he'll probably marry some old widow for her money."

"No, he won't. And he isn't engaged to anybody at all."

"Did you ask him that?"

"No, but I got it out of him. I didn't want to waste my young affections."

"Kathleen," said Geoffrey, "you ought to sit on her more than you do. She's simply full of bounce."

"Yes, I know. There's no squashing her. . . . Geoffrey, dear, you *will* spoil your dinner, if you go on eating cake like that."

"All right. Shove the lid on. . . . Tell me some more about the row. How does old Keighley take it? Has it knocked the stuffing out of him, or is he just as pompous and priggish as ever?"

"It's only his manner—all that," said Kathleen, rather hurriedly. "Lord Keighley always means well. We have made a friend of him, and he has been kindness itself—so valuable."

"But what's his value five miles off?"

"Oh," interposed Mollie mischievously, "five miles hasn't kept him away—at least, until lately."

And Mollie gave her imitation, speaking with the condescending patronage of an affected dowager. "He is a very worthy and attentive person, isn't he, Kathleen?"

"Don't be silly."

"Geoffrey, if you want to chaff and tease, you'd better chaff Kathleen."

Geoffrey laughed incredulously.

"What! Not about old Keighley?"

"As her chaperon," Mollie continued, "I can't

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say for certain. There may be nothing in it. He hasn't *spoken* yet ; but he pays *marked* attention."

Geoffrey laughed heartily, Mollie laughed mischievously, and Kathleen joined in their laughter. She bore her brother's facetious questions without discomfort. To-day she did not mind what anybody said.

For another day, for two whole days, foolish chatter and innocent fun and schoolboy noisiness continued unceasingly ; and then the house fell silent again.

General Mallock had come home.

He seemed tired, nervous, in dreadfully low spirits.

"Yes," he told Kathleen wearily. "I have settled everything—that is, I hope I have done so."

He confessed to having a headache, to feeling cold, and he went to bed without eating any dinner.

Next morning he said that he felt better ; he had merely caught a chill ; now that he was in his own house he would soon be quite fit again. Then he gave Kathleen an account of his London adventures.

He had called on several publishers, but did not like their ways ; and Kathleen at once understood from his tone as he said this that he had been received with inadequate courtesy.

But finally he had decided to place the book in the hands of Messrs. Blackray.

"Their reputation is very good, Kathleen—an old-established sound firm. They published Lord Lowestoft's book, and they said they made a tremendous success with it."

"Then it didn't deserve its success. It was a hateful book."

"They asked me if mine was the same style of thing."

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"How impudent of them!"

"Oh, they didn't intend to be impudent. But I rather fired up—and told them that there were no slanderous statements in *my* book, and not a word that I couldn't substantiate if called upon to do so."

"I'm glad you said that, father."

"And then they said the public were fond of gossipy personal books, and didn't mind a touch of slander here and there. Of course they are merely tradesmen—they look at everything from the commercial point of view. They asked me how I should describe my book, myself."

"How did you describe it?"

General Mallock smiled complacently. "I told them, my dear, that it was a human document. That's one of their cant phrases, you know—a human document. Blackray—I suppose it was Blackray—I didn't ask his name—a fat smug sort of fellow—he grinned when he heard that, and said there was always a good market for real human documents."

"And when can they get it out?"

"Oh, at once—They said it was just in time for the early spring season. One thing I didn't care about was the price. They said it must cost ten or twelve shillings a copy. It struck me as too much—as militating against a wide circulation."

"Yes, I agree with you, father."

"But they stood firm—custom of the trade, and so on. They said they couldn't make it properly remunerative for me unless—"

"You don't want remuneration."

"No, I told them so. I said, 'I don't ask for gain. I ask for the largest possible number of readers.' The answer was that the masses are never really reached until you come to cheaper editions. After a little while

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they can publish it at sixpence; and they assured me that there is practically no limit to the sale of sixpenny books. It may extend to millions."

"Ah, that's what *we* want," said Kathleen. "Father, I'm sure you have done wisely and well to trust it to them. No doubt they understand their business."

"Yes, a fellow in the smoking-room at the hotel told me that they are quite at the top of the tree."

"And, father, it was nice of them to settle everything on the spot. That was a compliment. They didn't ask to read it first."

"Well, they are reading it now."

"Oh!" Kathleen's face became grave and anxious.

"Oh! Then it isn't *absolutely* settled, father?"

"No, I suppose not—provisionally settled. Of course, if they didn't like the book, they could back out. But, Kathleen, I don't think they will—do you?"

"No, no. Only I wanted to know exactly how you stood with them."

"Well. I have told you. I agreed to their terms—so much a copy—what they would pay me. I have forgotten—but I wrote it down. I have the memorandum. No consequence, that—is it? And I gathered—they gave me to understand—that the reading was a matter of form, merely to find out the length of it, and so on. I fully understood that they meant to accept the book."

"And when will they let us know for certain?"

"Within the course of a few days." And General Mallock looked at his daughter wistfully. "Kathleen, you have—you have upset me a little by throwing doubt on it. You, you seem to fear—"

"No, I don't," said Kathleen. "Of course Mr. Blackray will jump at such a chance."

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But after this there was doubt in the mind of the General. He could think of nothing except the publishers' expected letter. Kathleen reminded him that the Christmas holidays would probably occasion delay ; they could scarcely hope to receive the letter before the New Year ; but the waiting enervated him to an extraordinary degree. His spirits were sinking lower and lower ; he became restless, querulous, irritable. It was a sad dull Christmas for everyone at Long Moor House.

XI

THE new year had come, nearly a fortnight gone now—and still no letter from Messrs. Blackray. General Mallock's restlessness was painful to see. The days seemed to be passed in watching for the postman. There was a morning and an afternoon post, and London letters as a rule arrived by the second delivery ; any time between four and five o'clock one might look for the postman, a sturdy red-faced man, stamping resolutely along the road from Ewesland ; but now it chanced more than once that he was unusually late.

General Mallock, waiting for him at the white gates, complained angrily of his dilatoriness.

"Well, sir, you must make allowances for the season. It isn't my fault." The postman defended himself stoutly. "Train's late at Bevistown—and I might be a packhorse for the stooff I have to carry—an' ten long miles to trudge on ma two journeys."

And then he handed over "the stooff" addressed to Long Moor House—prospectuses, circulars, kitchen parcels, unutterable rubbish.

When the postman had come and gone, the day was

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over for General Mallock. Nothing now but waiting to see what to-morrow would bring. He could not sit quiet; he could not read with attention, or talk consecutively; he wandered from room to room, went out of the house and walked in the darkness up and down the gravel drive, came back and went out again.

Kathleen advised him to telegraph to the publishers, asking why they hadn't written; but he declined to do this.

"No, that would be beneath my dignity. I won't let them know how greatly they have upset me—at any rate, not yet. I'll give them a few more days."

One afternoon Dr. Bryant, secretly summoned by Kathleen, came to pay New Year compliments; and he at once noticed the increased irritability of General Mallock. Indeed, the signs of nervous disturbance were distressingly obvious to an expert observer. Something very far from right here—something that should be checked promptly.

He was passing through the hall when Bryant arrived.

"What's that, O'Kelly? Who's there? Is it the post? . . . Oh, Bryant, how are you? Look here, you can tell me. The afternoon mail is always late—what's the cause? They make excuses that I don't believe. Are you and others suffering in the same way, or is it only my house that's neglected?"

"Oh, I don't think——"

General Mallock did not wait for an answer. He went on with strong irritation. "It's most annoying—damnably annoying when you're expecting important letters from London."

"Sir! It's not nearly four yet," said O'Kelly.

"Oh, is that so?" And General Mallock looked at his watch. "Good. . . . But, Bryant, you must excuse

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me. I can't stop here. My boy wants me out there—at the range. I must go to Geoffrey now. I'll see you later—in ten minutes."

O'Kelly, taking Dr. Bryant's hat and coat, explained that he and Mr. Geoffrey had constructed a moving target, "in order to divert the General."

"It's a pretty little toy," said O'Kelly. "A mounted warrior, that swishes across on strings. Have a look at it, sir, when ye're going out;" and he added confidentially, "The General's very *down*, sir."

"Yes, he seems rather out of sorts."

"Clane out of 'em, sir. . . . Step this way, sir. The young ladies are in the morning-room."

Miss Mallock was glad to see her friend and adviser; and she rapidly told him all that there was to tell of her father's health. Fatigue in London, a chill, and anxiety concerning his book.

"Oh, *that's* what he is worrying about?" Dr. Bryant seemed relieved by learning that there was a perhaps not unnatural reason for the worried aspect and the querulous voice. "And, Miss Mallock, tell me this. Does he count as much as ever on the result that the book is to achieve?"

"Oh, yes, of course he does—more than ever."

"And when is the book to appear?" Dr. Bryant asked the question thoughtfully and gravely.

"Almost at once. That is, we hope so. We are waiting for definite news—and it is the delay that is so trying to father."

"Yes, I see."

The conversation was interrupted by the hasty entrance of O'Kelly.

"Miss Kathleen. Lord Keighley's servant has just brought you two brace of pheasants. And his lordship is treading on the birds' tails. He's now walking

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round the house to the front door ; " and O'Kelly dropped his voice to a confidential whisper. " Should I say ye're not at home ? "

" No. We are always at home to Lord Keighley."

" I thought the General was so down that he wouldn't be wishing for company. But of course you know best, miss."

Dr. Bryant would have modestly withdrawn before the appearance of the new arrival, but he was told to stay. Kathleen wanted fuller advice from him.

" And father will like to talk to you presently. . . . How do you do, Lord Keighley. You're quite a stranger."

" Yes, ain't I ? " said Keighley, shaking hands with Kathleen and nodding to her sister. " Miss Mollie, your humble servant."

" You know Dr. Bryant," said Kathleen.

" Oh, yes. How d'ye do ; " and he nodded carelessly to the doctor, and spoke with a quite unconscious pomposity. " I consider myself under an obligation to Dr. Bryant for his skill, and, ah, cleverness. Unseasonable weather, isn't it ? Too warm for the time of the year ; " and he pointed a forefinger impressively at Kathleen. " Those birds will want eating, not keeping, you know."

" Thank you so much for them," said Kathleen.

" A new year's gift," said Mollie. " Such a charming souvenir ! "

" Well, and so they may be a souvenir," said Keighley, laughing and then looking solemn. " For perhaps they are the last I shall be allowed to get—if things go on like this. I say. May I ask for something in exchange ? "

" Oh, I'm sure," said Mollie, " we couldn't refuse you anything. What do you desire ? "

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"A cup of tea. Or is it too early?"

"It's never too early for tea," said Kathleen.

"In exchange for pheasants," added Mollie as she rang the bell.

"I have had no lunch," said Keighley in a tone of self-pity.

"Poor man! Then you shan't be kept waiting for your tea."

Lord Keighley was not at his best this afternoon. He wore the gamekeeper costume, with the brown gaiters and thick-soled boots; and he looked heavy, even lumpish. His pleasant friendliness of manner had somehow deteriorated into off-hand abruptness; when he smiled or laughed, his face too rapidly became a stolid mask again; altogether he seemed too much wrapped up in himself and his own affairs. Kathleen guessed that he was feeling oppressed by multitudinous cares; she glanced at him kindly and sympathetically; but she thought with regret that Geoffrey would not detect the least improvement in him. Geoffrey would not believe how nice he really could be—unless he displayed himself to better advantage than this. Unluckily, however, Lord Keighley was fated to go from bad to worse to-day.

"My first chance of getting up here," he continued consequentially. "I have been hard at it with the lawyers—learned gentlemen who charge you high fees for opinions that any chap out of the street with an ounce of common sense would give you for nothing. . . . By the way, how's your father? I want a few words with him."

"He'll be here directly."

While the servants were bringing in the tea-things Mollie chattered with Bryant, and Keighley took the opportunity of speaking in a low voice to Kathleen.

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"I say. I hoped to catch you alone—but it doesn't matter. I hope you haven't thought that I was neglecting you all."

"Oh, no. We knew how busy you were."

It was curious, but speaking to her he became at once the nice, the thoroughly nice Keighley of recent times. He looked at her with kind and intelligent eyes, and his voice was full of friendliness and good-nature.

"Look here, Miss Kathleen. It's about your father. I ought to have come up long before now; because I have been given a diplomatic mission—to ask him something—as a favour."

"Something serious."

"Oh, dear no. But he mayn't like it—and, on my honour, I feel very shy and uncomfortable in putting it before him. They've made me their ambassador, because we are such friends—and so they think he'll take the request better from me."

"Yes, tell me what it is."

"Well, they ask him—simply as a favour—to sacrifice his private amusements in the public cause. They say, if he wants to help the official organization of the county—"

But just then General Mallock was heard calling loudly in the hall for O'Kelly; and Keighley said no more. He had been everything that he ought to be while talking to Kathleen; now, however, he soon relapsed into pomposity.

Outside in the hall General Mallock was showing O'Kelly his new cardboard target, and its detached wooden support.

"O'Kelly, your rabbit won't work, or else I have broken it."

"Rabbit!" said O'Kelly. "We intended it for a mounted warrior."

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"Did you? Well, it's unmounted now. It won't move."

"Oh, we'll soon patch that," said O'Kelly, examining the damage. "A scissors and some more string, and we'll splice it."

General Mallock hurried into the morning-room, and fussily demanded assistance.

"Mollie! Your largest pair of scissors. Be quick."

"Father," said Kathleen, "Lord Keighley has come to see you."

"How are you, my dear fellow? . . . Now, Mollie, the largest you can find."

"General," said Keighley, "I have been deputed to approach you about something. Those in power have sent me because they know—"

"I'll be back in a minute;" and General Mallock hurried out again. To return presently with his broken cardboard and a ball of string. Altogether engrossed by his little task, he began laboriously to bind the string round and round, carefully tying it at intervals and cutting off the ends.

Meanwhile the tea-pot and cake-dishes had appeared, and Kathleen and her sister were attending to the visitors.

"There," said Kathleen, handing a cup to Keighley. "Sit down. You must be tired as well as hungry. What trouble these discontented people are giving you!"

"Yes. I don't mind saying I *am* tired of them and their discontent." He did not sit down, but stationed himself on the hearth-rug, and, standing with his broad back to the fire, he seemed almost aggressively large and dominant. "Fed up with it—worn out with it—dead sick of it."

"You are determined," said Dr. Bryant, mildly

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interrogative, "to reinstate Mr. Gilchrist—if he is acquitted?"

"Certainly I shall do so—and of course he will be acquitted."

"I am told that your men will never forgive him."

"Who tells you that?"

"Donaldson."

"The dissenting parson!" Keighley took a gulp of tea, and then shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "With all due respect to his cloth, he's a meddlesome fool."

"But don't you think," said Kathleen, "that by your loyalty to Mr. Gilchrist, you may be mortgaging your future comfort?"

"I can't help that."

"I do wish he hadn't shot the man."

"So does he now. If the chap hadn't recovered, it would have been very awkward. But the chap has recovered—and, as I say, we're most grateful to Dr. Bryant for making him all right so quickly."

"It's impossible not to blame Mr. Gilchrist," said Kathleen earnestly. "The poor man—what was his name, Dr. Bryant?"

"Denham."

"Poor Denham swore that he intended no violence—and he and the others were quite unarmed. That was proved, wasn't it?"

Keighley shrugged his shoulders again.

"My dear Miss Mallock, put yourself in Gilchrist's place. It was the middle of the night. These ruffians came bellowing round his house. What did they expect? If you were roused from your sleep by a dozen raving scoundrels, wouldn't you have a bang at them?"

"Not till I knew that I was in real danger."

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"Then you've better nerves than most of your sex," said Keighley smiling at her. "Indeed I'm ready to admit that you have. I admire your pluck, but—"

"Let me give you some more tea," said Kathleen, hurriedly. The conversation had taken a bad turn. Instinctively looking round to the window where her father was busy with his cardboard and string, she saw that he now listened.

"Thanks," said Keighley, taking his cup to the tea-table. "No, rightly or wrongly, Gilchrist was in fear of his life. I don't pretend that Gilchrist was a hero. Heroes are rare. And I do say, put any ordinary middle-aged man in a tight place—and you won't find much of the hero left in him. The odds are that his first notion will be to save his skin—at all costs."

"That's *your* view," said General Mallock. He had dropped the ball of twine, and turned from the window. Standing very erect, he stared hard at Keighley. "Well, it's the view of the world at large—but it isn't always correct ;" and he turned again, and picked up the string.

"It seems to me common sense," said Keighley, quite oblivious of his clumsy handling of a perilous subject.

"Here's your tea," said Kathleen. "Do eat and drink."

"Thanks ;" and he continued heavily and didactically, following the line of his own thoughts with fatal persistence. "I consider that I stand here for law and order—practically doing the government's work ; and I maintain that if the government aren't grateful to me—"

"Don't expect gratitude from governments," said General Mallock. "No, nor justice either."

"They listen to what I say, but—"

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"Do they listen to you?" said General Mallock.

"Ah, that's because you're a person of importance."

"Well, one is compelled to remind them that one isn't a mere nobody. My position carries certain obligations."

"Noblesse oblige," said Mollie.

"I often wish that my old uncle had provided himself with a son and heir. Then I shouldn't be here. But he didn't. I am here."

"J'y suis. J'y reste," said Mollie.

But Keighley disregarded childish interruptions; he looked from one to another, and continued as if addressing an audience from a platform.

"The quarries scarcely pay expenses. I might shut them up. How would the men like that? But, no, they are in my charge. I must hold them; and, whatever the trouble, I must see it through. Mind you," and he pointed his finger impressively at Dr. Bryant, "I think it may be very serious trouble. But I can't give way to threats without a fight for it, can I? I can't throw up the sponge, and cut and run."

Once more General Mallock had drawn himself to his full height. He was glaring at Keighley. Kathleen, Mollie, and Dr. Bryant betrayed the utmost uneasiness.

"Do drink your tea before it's cold, Lord Keighley."

"Thanks. And may I have another bit of cake? Excellent cake!"

"Yes, isn't it? Our cook makes——"

"The trouble here is a part of a wider trouble." Keighley, declining to be interrupted, pursued his argumentative harangue. "Agitation unchecked by authority. Look at these parades and speechifyings at Bevistown. They had something like a riot there the other day."

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"Oh," said Bryant, "a very *mild* riot."

"Yes, but don't some of the worst diseases begin mildly? Nevertheless they want strong remedies. There's a cavalry regiment doing nothing at York. Let them come here and help in keeping order."

"Do let them," said Mollie. "It's simply a grand idea."

"And I've urged the Lord Lieutenant to appoint half a dozen more magistrates—fellows with some sense and grit in them. Why, no strong bench would ever have committed Gilchrist—or made me put up such a bail for him. They allowed themselves to be over-awed by mere clamour. Nincompoops! But of course the difficulty is to find suitable people—men with some education and knowledge of the world, who can afford the time, and will give their services regularly. You see, General, that is an admitted difficulty, but—"

Kathleen's face had suddenly lit up, and she broke in delightedly.

"And you want father to be one of the new magistrates! Oh, father, you must say yes to that."

"I am quite willing to serve," said General Mallock, with quietly dignified satisfaction, "since it has at last occurred to somebody that I am suitable for the honour."

"No, I really didn't mean to bother *you*, General—because I know how you cling to your leisure hours. But of course"—and his lordship stopped lamely and stupidly, looked embarrassed, and then floundered on again. "The selection lies with the Lord Lieutenant, not with me—don't you know. But—er—I shall be most happy to submit your name."

"Oblige me by not doing so."

"Whatever you wish."

"I own a few acres of land. I have lived here several

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years. The poor people—the common, ignorant people look up to me, respect me. Doesn't it strike you as rather odd that the Lord Lieutenant hasn't made me a J.P. long ago?"

"It seems an oversight."

"Oh, no. He obeys orders." The General was speaking with some heat. "The word has been given: 'Neglect no opportunity of putting a slight upon George Mallock.'

"I don't for a moment think—"

"Not the smallest consequence;" and the General turned his back, and with trembling fingers wound up the loose string.

Mollie went over to him, stood by his side, and asked if she might assist him by holding the piece of board while he bound the string.

"Thanks, Mollie. This fiddling work makes one's hand shake."

"Lord Keighley," said Kathleen, in a hard cold voice, "will you have some more tea?"

"No, thank you. . . . I must be moving on. . . . I'll bid you good-night now."

Kathleen had turned and was going to assist Mollie in assisting her father. She spoke as coldly as before, and without looking round.

"Yes, you have a long walk, haven't you?"

Dr. Bryant, observing the General, saw how great an effort was required before he could resume his ordinary courteous manner. But he completely succeeded in doing so.

"Good-night, Keighley—my dear fellow, good-night. One moment, and I'll walk with you as far as the gate."

"There," said Mollie, "done now, father. That's all secure now."

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"An invention of my boy's," said the General. "Look at it, Keighley. We are improving our range. Targets that move!"

"Oh, by Jove, I forgot." Instead of scrutinizing the cardboard target, Keighley drew back and exhibited every sign of extreme embarrassment. "Our talk drove it out of my head. But this is just what they deputed me to approach you about—your range. The territorial authorities don't altogether approve of what you are doing here."

"Indeed?"

"They seem to think that it clashes with the official association."

"But I haven't yet been invited to join the association."

"Oh, that must certainly be an oversight."

"Perhaps."

"What they say is, they couldn't recognize your private organization as a club."

"I haven't craved recognition for it."

"No. But they do feel it clashes. And--er—in fact—they want you to drop it."

"So that is it?" General Mallock tossed the cardboard to the window ledge, and laughed harshly. "That's it. The word has been given. I'm not to be allowed even to *play* at soldiers. I am the disgraced child, who must not solace himself with toys;" and he laughed again. "No—it is necessary to make him feel his disgrace. That's the essence of the punishment."

"But," cried Kathleen indignantly, "they can't presume to say what you should do with your own servants."

"No consequence," said General Mallock, "not the least consequence. . . . Where did I leave my cloak?"

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And he went out of the room, followed by Mollie and Lord Keighley.

Kathleen had turned to Dr. Bryant, and was appealing to him for sympathy.

"Isn't that a burning shame?"

"Yes, red tape—what one has always to expect from red tape. But it really is too bad."

"Please go with him and smooth things over. Lord Keighley is utterly tactless."

"Yes, I'll endeavour—"

"Stay and talk with father at the gate. He waits at the gate for the postman. And don't let Lord Keighley stop. Get rid of him."

Keighley, although he lingered in the hall, did not thrust his company upon General Mallock or Dr. Bryant; and the final task of getting rid of him fell upon Kathleen herself. While the others were going out, he returned to the morning-room.

"Miss Kathleen!" He stood smiling on the threshold, and spoke lightly and easily. "You didn't say good-night to me."

"Good-night, Lord Keighley."

He seemed quite surprised by the coldness of her voice; and, coming from the door, he looked at her inquiringly.

"I say. I'm awfully sorry that I upset your father. But have I been unfortunate enough to offend you too?"

"Yes—bitterly."

"May I ask how?"

"By almost every word you uttered from the moment that you came into the room."

"Really?"

"Is it that you have no tact—or no heart?"

"As to my heart—But that must take care of itself."

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He was stolidly huffed. He had assumed his heaviest air ; and he set his face, as if in pride denuding it of any emotional expression. Yet as he looked at her so stolidly, his eyes seemed to speak a reproach of which the words might have been : " This unkindness is as little deserved as it was anticipated."

" Couldn't you understand ? " She went on with a change of tone—as if her resentment had been softened by the silent protest. " Couldn't you *see* how you were wounding him ? "

" I meant to save him from annoyance. The association were going to write to him, but I persuaded them to wait. I thought he would take it more pleasantly from me, in a casual way."

" But about the magistrates ! "

" Well, *you* did that—not I."

" How could I suppose anything else, when you'd just said you had a mission to ask him something ? "

" Yes—but if it comes to tact, ladies ought to be quicker than men to—"

" That wasn't all. Every word was double-edged. About running away—and throwing up the sponge ! How could you ? To him."

" It's difficult always to remember. Surely you know I'd cut my tongue out sooner than say anything like that on purpose."

Kathleen's tone changed again. Ceasing to accuse, she began to entreat, and her words came fast and eagerly in a forcible appeal.

" They *must* make him a magistrate. Oh, it's infamous, the way they all treat him. Lord Keighley, compel them to do it. Insist upon their appointing him."

" I can suggest the appointment ; but I fear——"

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" You are not afraid of reminding people of your importance when it's for your own affairs. Now be important for someone else."

But this was too much for Keighley. He showed that he felt seriously huffed, and he answered with a most ponderous dignity.

" I regret that in your judgment I have been guilty of boastfulness—and—er—vulgar self-assumption."

" Oh, please show yourself a real friend for once."

" I thought I had shown it consistently."

" Force them to give him this sign of respect ; " and Kathleen's appeal became piteously intense. " Heaven knows it's trifling enough—but it may be everything to him. You can't guess what he suffers. He came here to escape from petty humiliations—to be alone—far away from everybody ; and it's worse—yes, it's worse than if we were in a brutal city where the rabble mocked him in the streets."

" On my honour, if I could——"

" They won't refuse you. You can do it for him—if you will."

" I'll do it for you—if I can."

" For all of us."

" No," said Keighley stolidly. " For *you*."

" Then, yes," said Kathleen impulsively, " for *me*—if you care for my good opinion."

" You know I care for it ; " and he took her hand, and held it firmly.

Mollie, as she came into the room, saw them shaking hands ; and then at last Lord Keighley was got rid of.

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XII

THIS evening the vigil of General Mallock at his gate was prolonged indefinitely. Dr. Bryant stayed with him for more than an hour, walking up and down the drive and out on the road, first in the grey dusk and then in the black darkness ; but still no postman appeared. Perhaps he had come and gone. He might have passed earlier than usual—before the General came out to watch for him. Either there were no letters to be delivered at Long Moor House, or the postman was atrociously, wickedly, maddeningly late.

But General Mallock would not give it up as a bad job ; after Bryant had gone he still waited and watched ; he refused to come in when Geoffrey was sent to fetch him. Then Geoffrey waited with him ; and then, when nearly another hour had passed, Kathleen came—and then reluctantly he consented to return to the house.

"No postman, Kathleen. Inexplicable ! What's the time ? . . . Really six o'clock ? "

He could not rest. He walked about the hall unceasingly, gloomy, troubled, causing gloom and trouble to the whole house.

"He won't come now, father. You may be sure that there is nothing for us to-day."

"I can't be sure—I can't understand it. . . . But I suppose you must be right. He couldn't be as late as this. . . . Kathleen, why don't they write to me ? Do you think we may take it that no news is good news ? "

"Yes—I think so, father."

When O'Kelly and the footman began to close the

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shutters and put up the bars across the hall door, it seemed like shutting out the last gleam of hope, and General Mallock hesitated before he could allow them to do it.

"Go round the rooms first," he told O'Kelly.

There were solid iron shutters to all the windows and doors on the ground floor, and O'Kelly and Frederick made a lugubrious clanking sound as they passed from room to room, putting the bars in position.

"There, Mr. Geoffrey," said O'Kelly, finishing his task in the morning-room, and trying to speak facetiously. "Now we're ready for burglars—or wolves. There's something for them to crack their teeth on." Then he went back to the hall. "Will I close these now, sir?"

"Yes—oh, yes," said General Mallock disconsolately. "That is, if everybody is in."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Then close us in for the night—now that we are all together. Yes, lock up—bolt and bar against intruders. . . . Stop! What was that? I heard something. A voice out there?"

Frederick had fixed the shutters across the two windows, O'Kelly had just clanked the second bar into its groove on the door lintel; and now at the General's command they both stood listening.

"Tis footsteps," said O'Kelly.

Next moment the door bell rang loudly.

O'Kelly with noise and haste lifted the bars, folded the shutters, opened the door, and peered out into the darkness.

"Why, it's Doctor Bryant," he announced loudly.

"And the postman!"

"What!" cried General Mallock. "Scandalous! More than two hours late!"

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"Yes, but it's not his fault." Dr. Bryant came in, talking excitedly. "What do you think of this? He was laid hold of by the quarrymen—and his bag taken from him."

"Nothing less, sir," said the postman, breathlessly. "What could I do? I stroogled to defend ma bag."

"They held him up," said Bryant, "on the King's highway. Isn't it outrageous?"

"Dragged me 'oondred yards off the road, and went through ma bag. I can't say what they've took, but they examined every letter;" and the postman brought his ransacked bag to the hall table, and opened it.

"Can you give me more light, sir?"

"Yes, bring that lamp, O'Kelly."

At the sound of the excited voices, Mollie and Geoffrey had come out of the morning-room; and Kathleen, hurrying down stairs, was in time to hear the story of highway violence.

"Are you sure," she asked, "that they were Lord Keighley's men?"

"Yes, miss," said the postman, looking through the contents of the bag. "Twenty or thirty of the dismissed lot. That McGaher was one of them."

"There's a blackguard for you," said O'Kelly.

"These are yours, sir;" and the postman handed General Mallock three letters and a bulky parcel. "See if they've been tampered with. Are the seals broken, sir?"

"No, this is intact. . . . Kathleen, come here."

Geoffrey and Mollie began to ask the postman questions; O'Kelly joined in the conversation; Bryant told how he had met the postman running up the road; everybody talked at once.

"Did they knock you about?"

"Well," said the postman, "they used me pretty

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rough, but kept up the mask of joking—to make out it was a lark, and not robbery. Robbery! It's treason, isn't it, sir, to stop a postman."

General Mallock and Kathleen were staring at the ugly brown paper parcel as it lay squarely and heavily on the table in the bright lamp-light. Both of them had read its printed label—"From Blackray & Co., London."

"Father," said Kathleen piteously, "it's from them! Oh, they *can't* have—"

"Open it, my dear. Open it;" and together they tore the thing out of its coarse wrappers.

An envelope fell out.

"Oh! This is their letter, father. . . . Oh! Oh, how could they?"

The postman was asking again if any seals had been broken, and General Mallock answered over his shoulder.

"No—It's all right."

"Then I'll go on, sir. I want to make my deposition on oath—I must report at once."

"O'Kelly, give him some refreshment before he goes."

Kathleen, stooping over the parcel, had ruefully lifted the loose sheets of typewritten copy, and she was almost in tears.

"How disgusting!" she murmured. "They've taken out all the clips and the ribbon bows that I put in so carefully. They've crumpled it and dirtied it. They've made such a mess of it that I shall have to do it all over again."

Geoffrey had come to the table, and he spoke in an awe-struck whisper.

"Not the *book*!"

"Yes."

Dr. Bryant stepped forward hastily, and glanced

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at General Mallock. He stood reading the letter; his face had flushed, and his hand was shaking.

"General," said Dr. Bryant deprecatingly, "don't forget our talk just now. Remember what I ventured to tell you. Remember what you were good enough to promise."

General Mallock did not answer, did not seem to hear; he gave the letter to Kathleen.

"Read it. Read it aloud—as loudly as you can. Let all know their answer."

Kathleen in a suffocated voice recited the letter, mingling with it her doleful exclamations.

"Regret. . . . Although much obliged . . . Oh! . . . 'Could not conscientiously advise you to publish.' What brutes! . . . 'Even at your own expense.' . . . Oh! . . . 'The fact is, the memory of the principal episode has faded, and we question if the public would now entertain any interest in the subject. At the time, when the events were fresh, the book no doubt would have enjoyed a wide sale' . . . Oh!"

Bryant, watching General Mallock's face, made a vague gesture, and spoke in the same deprecating or appealing tone.

"General! Self-restraint, you know. Very disappointing, but——"

"That's their answer, Bryant. You all heard it. But it's of no consequence—at all. Not the smallest consequence." As he said this, General Mallock turned abruptly, laughed, and moved towards the fire-place, "No;" and he swung round on his heel.

"General, gently, gently."

Then there came the explosion that Bryant seemed to be dreading. It was a violent outburst—face contorted with passion, limbs shaking, voice growing louder and louder till it reached almost to a scream.

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"No—great God—what does it matter to them? Petty sneaking tradesmen, who'd sue for damages if you spat in their face—who don't know what honour is, or they'd sell it across a counter for gain."

"Gently—gently."

"But they are the world. High and low—show me the difference. I tell you, Bryant, there's no justice left. They are all cowards—cowards—cowards. Brave men don't suspect one another—don't condemn one another without trial. I was never tried or judged;" and the explosive force of emotion broke the loud voice to pitiful shrillness. "But when I claim my right to plead, I'm to be laughed out of court. Take him away! There's no appeal *now!* Statute of limitations! Too late—too late. The miserable wretch must suffer his punishment to the bitter end;" and he brandished his arms wildly above his head.

"There! Well, yes," said Bryant. "Very disappointing."

The General had dropped his arms. He stood shaking and gasping, staring at Dr. Bryant.

"After all," said Bryant kindly, but very firmly, "the publishers only tell the truth. Truly the thing is almost entirely forgotten. Then be wise, General, and try to forget it yourself."

"I'll try," said General Mallock, after a pause; and he pressed a still shaky hand against his breast. "I'll try to lock up my trouble here."

"That's wise."

"You mean, for the comfort of my friends?"

"I mean, for your own comfort too," said Dr. Bryant gravely and meaningly. "Remember the advice I gave you just now—before your disappointment."

"Ah! . . . It can't matter at this late hour whether

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the world believes in me or not?" And General Mallock looked round at the scared white faces of his children.

"Father," said Kathleen, "we believe in you. You know that."

"Yes, dad," said Mollie, "we believe in you."

"Yes," said Geoffrey, "we believe."

Each spoke with fervent conviction, and yet perhaps there could be detected in all three voices something of the effort that was necessary to sustain their faith.

XIII

GENERAL MALLOCK was keeping his promise. He was silent about his wrongs. Either he had accepted Dr. Bryant's advice with an astonishing completeness, and summoned latent and unsuspected powers of will to sustain his determination; or he had passed into another phase of thought, and the trouble, widening, deepening, secretly expanding, had become a thing too big to speak of.

Kathleen told Dr. Bryant that the publishers' letter gave the death-blow to all their fond hopes about the book. She had asked her father if he would not publish it through some other firm—at his own cost, without incurring the risk of another refusal; but he had said, "No. That is over and done with. Don't remind me of our wasted labour. Let us both try and forget."

"And believe me," said Bryant, hearing of this answer, "it is the best thing you can do."

But to Kathleen this destruction of a long-cherished hope was horribly cruel. Her heart bled for the frustrated author. She had been terrified by the violence of the nervous outburst and by the prostration and

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tremulous weakness that followed it ; but now, after two days, her father was perfectly calm and quiet again, bearing his disappointment so bravely that she could not understand the doctor's insistent hostility to the idea of an ultimate publication. Nothing, however, could make the doctor alter his opinion.

" I am certain that I am right," said Bryant. " Your father's nerves have been getting into an unsatisfactory state—and they must be allowed peace and rest, without disturbing elements or excitement. You saw for yourself how greatly he was upset—and perhaps naturally so. Well now, suppose that the disappointment had come later, in a vastly accumulated form ! I mean, suppose the disappointment had been caused *after* the publication of the book—by its failure ! "

" I can't believe that it would fail."

" Still it is what might unfortunately happen—and think of how upsetting it might prove to be."

So the book was to lie ~~for~~ ever where it lay now, hidden away, locked up in a recess of the big bureau, and the story of the book was to remain concealed in the mind of its writer. This was the seemingly cruel but very firmly uttered advice of a doctor and friend.

General Mallock, resuming the dull routine of life after his too exciting occupation, made no further complaint against the world or destiny. Silence—that was the watchword henceforth. No more vain repining.

But how to amuse oneself, or anyhow fill the empty hours ? The range was to be abandoned ; there would be no playing at soldiers. He had submitted to the decree of the territorial association just as he had accepted the finality of the publishers' verdict.

Gardeners, under the direction of O'Kelly, had almost wiped away the earth-work and filled in the trench

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when the snow began to fall ; and by next morning the little range, the fields, and the endless moor had disappeared. Long Moor House stood black and stern—like a solitary rock in the midst of a white polar sea.

During one night the unreasonably mild weather had changed to the normal rigours of winter ; hard frost followed the heavy snow-fall, and the sharp-edged north wind blew with a vindictive steadiness. Down the valley the snow drifted and banked deep and high before the frost could pin and hold it ; Bevistown was almost buried, and work had been found for some of the unemployed in digging it out again ; processions or demonstrations were rendered impossible ; and far or near, on the moor, in the town, and at the quarries, all was quiet.

There was an excuse now for the General to remain indoors. Exercise, except for the young and active, had become too difficult. But these bright cold days had a certain invigorating character for quite healthy people. Geoffrey and Mollie busied themselves with improvised sleighs and toboggans ; and the wheels of an old carriage were removed and runners fitted in their place, thus enabling Mr. Geoffrey to use the horses in some reckless, break-neck drives along the upper moor roads.

The horse-sledge was suggested by their neighbour Lord Keighley, who came spinning up the slope one afternoon with horses galloping and bells tinkling in true Siberian style. He left Geoffrey admiring this handsome and successful equipage while he went into the hall for a few words with the young ladies, but he did not linger to-day. He refused to divest himself of his vast fur wraps, and would not allow Kathleen to fetch her father.

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"No, please don't trouble him. I only came to say good-bye—or rather au revoir. For I shall be back in a few days."

Then he told them that he was off to-morrow morning to York, for the trial of Mr. Gilchrist.

"I must be there, of course. And I mean to be with him when he comes back here. If there is to be any nonsense on his return, they'll have to reckon with me, don't you know, as well as with him. But I don't think we shall have any more fuss now."

He said that, except for the unavoidable interference of the snow, work at the quarries was going on very well. The men appeared to be in a more reasonable mood, and he believed that the bulk of them desired to show by their good behaviour that they dissociated themselves from the last outrage committed by the turbulent minority.

As to that disgraceful affair of the ransacked mail-bag—the majesty of the law should be, must be vindicated. But there were considerable difficulties—the postman, perhaps turning pusillanimous, was betraying a hopeless incapacity in the identification of his assailants. Confronted with twenty suspected men, he had failed—he said he could not now be sure about any one of them; it was nearly dark when the men stopped him on the road, and quite dark before they let him go again. He could not even swear to the presence of the redoubtable McGaher, although this noisy scoundrel had been almost certainly the ring-leader of the gang. The postman was probably afraid of denouncing the scoundrel. Not unnaturally it might occur to him that after a proper vindication of the inviolable sanctity of His Majesty's Posts, he the humble officer would be left unprotected and lonely on the same road with another bag. Would the law and

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the gentlefolk be of much use to him when he was trudging the moor and the punished men took a fancy to pay him out for his tale-bearing?

No matter—the wrong-doers must be brought to justice sooner or later. Lord Keighley was quite determined about it.

"And, I say." This was to Kathleen, significantly and smilingly, in the moment of leave-taking. "That other little matter! You know—your command to me! I'm attending to it;" and he squeezed her hand instead of shaking it. "Au revoir. You'll soon see me again."

Keighley, however, was detained in York rather longer than he had anticipated, and while there he found time to write three or four letters to the elder Miss Mallock.

"My dear Miss Kathleen," said his lordship, "this is only to tell you again that I have put things in good train with regard to the Commission of the Peace. You may rest assured that whatever influence I possess shall be used to the last ounce. I arrived safely, and am fairly comfortable at the hotel."

This perhaps was a very natural letter to write—except for the last sentence. He knew that she would be glad to learn that he was exerting himself on her father's behalf; but surely he had no right to suppose that she could be anxious to hear of his safe arrival and hotel comfort. And the other letters seemed to be altogether unnecessary.

Kathleen answered the first of the series, but did not write again to the powerful ally whose aid she had so impulsively invoked.

"My dear Miss Kathleen, I have it on the best authority that there is not the smallest doubt about

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G's acquittal. . . . So no more now from yours ever, Keighley."

No more now! Indeed no—why anything at all? These letters worried her considerably, provided food for thought, made her retire into herself and emerge from a long introspection looking very serious.

"My dear Miss Kathleen. The best of news. G's trial did not last forty minutes. It was purely a formal affair. The jury did not leave the box. I come back immediately."

He had not told her that he intended to write to her; he did not complain because she had written only once to him; he sent her his almost daily news as a matter of course—as though there had been some compact or bond between them, and it had become his duty to keep her informed of all that concerned him. But that was an assumption which could not be tolerated—or should not be tolerated without exactly measuring its present import and possible future development. There was nothing whatever between them—except the innocent little secret that he had pledged himself to obtain a recognition or compliment that would certainly gratify her poor slighted father.

She thought of the animated conversation in which she had won this reluctantly given pledge from Lord Keighley, and she pondered deeply over his words and his manner. To some extent the catastrophe of the rejected book had obliterated all the colour and life of her recollection; yet she remembered things well enough, and the memory brought her a rather fluttered sense of confusion and apprehensive doubt. He had said he would do it for her sake. But why not? That was merely a manner of speaking: for her, rather than for the others, because she was the one that really and truly he knew best.

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Nevertheless she remembered—well enough—how for a moment she hesitated to accept the boon on those explicit terms ; and how, yielding to strong instinctive impulse, she had echoed and ratified his words—with subsequent clasping of hands, interchange of firmly cordial glances, and a certain thrilling reciprocity of stirred emotion that passed and broke with his pressure and release of her fingers.

It proved a disturbing recollection now that Lord Keighley was coming home again. If he was foolish enough to suppose—if his letters were intended clumsily to convey to her the fact that he for his part considered their little secret confidence as the opening of a preposterously bigger transaction, she ought at once to undeceive him. Yes—it must be done promptly, because the old friendly relations would be shattered by this feeling of uneasiness and constraint, if it were permitted to continue.

Whatever object, artful or ingenuous, Keighley had proposed to himself when letter-writing at the comfortable York hotel, he had unquestionably succeeded in making Miss Mallock think about him during his absence. He loomed large in her thoughts—a persistent, rather overwhelming figure, from which there was no escape. She was always thinking of him—as the personification of a difficult problem for which she was unexpectedly called upon to find a speedy solution, or merely as a good-natured friend whose friendship had gradually and mysteriously enhanced in value to so great an extent that she would forfeit or lose it with extreme regret.

Seen in thought-pictures he appeared to her a staunch good friend that any one, however critical and hard to please, might esteem and encourage—simply as a friend. Often tactless, occasionally quite stupid, he

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was nevertheless always well-intentioned, straightforward, and sincere. A jovial ally, a kind comrade—but anything else?

She thought of him as he had last presented himself to her eyes, standing at the hall door, looking so very big in his shaggy furs, with cheery open-air voice, and face reddened by the cold wind; and then immediately there came another, an earlier picture of him, as he had appeared in his white waistcoat and evening clothes, seeming comparatively slight and slim, an elegant well-polished visitor standing on the hearth-rug and looking at her with a meditative smile. Really he was rather a handsome man—whenever he dressed himself properly.

Trouble and doubt in all these thoughts of him; and yet something also of comfort and kindling warmth, together with an instinctive dread of the large dull blank that would be left in her thoughts if he were thrust out of them altogether.

And when he returned from York, and came laughing cheerily, with the pleasant music of sleigh bells and a whirring sound of the metal runners over the frozen snow, she was quite glad to see him—in fact, as well as in thought.

He was jolly and inspiriting—nice to Mollie, *very* nice to Geoffrey, and deferentially attentive to his absent-minded silent host. She herself had no opportunity for any private explanation with him, and she did not wish or seek for one.

All her recent ponderings seemed now to be silly self-conscious nonsense. She felt quite easy and contented with the materially visible, palpable, audible Keighley.

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XIV

DURING this quiet uneventful time while the shovelled snow still blocked the little street at Ewesland, Dr. Bryant was suddenly brought face to face with a crisis in his private life and a turning point in his professional career.

The principal physician of a large southern town wrote to offer him a splendid chance of profit and advancement. There was a vacant position at the town hospital that carried an unusually good salary with it; and Bryant's friend, now an old man, wanted a young and energetic partner in his private practice. He said very handsomely that he had always entertained a high opinion of Bryant; he believed that he could secure the nomination of so fully qualified a candidate; and he knew no one who would suit him so well in the proposed partnership. He urged Bryant to apply at once for the hospital position, and to come down South to show himself as soon as he possibly could do so.

A great chance, tumbling out of the sky; a strong friendly hand unexpectedly stretched forth to drag him from obscure mediocrity into what was, comparatively speaking, prominent success—Bryant felt a glow of gratitude, a re-enforced confidence, a heightened sense of personal power, as he thought of the opening and the man who was trying to confer so substantial a benefit.

Nevertheless he could not grasp at this chance of a lifetime. He took two days to make up his mind, and then precipitately telegraphed saying that he found himself unable to leave the north of England.

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It was really a discovery rather than a decision. He thought that he intended to go, he believed that he ought to go, and he discovered that he could not go.

What he once used to think of with fear as a terrible fate had come to pass. He had stuck fast. Gradually the horizon that seemed so narrow had become sufficiently large; his dull days had filled themselves with new interests; the people among whom he worked had changed from vague meaningless figures into humbly dependent friends. He was of real use up here, and he felt little faith that he would be more useful anywhere else. Then why hurriedly plunge into a wider sphere of action? Inwardly he recognized a speciousness or artificiality in all the arguments that he attempted to weigh as guidance for a final determination. For in truth he had no choice. The wild moorland—or something else—was holding him.

On the day that he sent his telegram of refusal he had been at Long Moor House. He and Miss Kathleen Mallock sat talking together, first about the General, and then, with the talk pleasantly drifting, about books and thoughts and abstract ideas. This quiet talk by the wood fire in the hall lasted for a good time, and before it was over Bryant felt a sudden desire to describe his state of perplexity and to ask for Miss Mallock's advice. Yet, curiously enough, he was utterly unable to do so; shyness, diffidence, and a horror of appearing egotistical, tied his tongue when he attempted to speak to her about himself.

But he carried the atmosphere of Long Moor House all the way home with him across the snow, and he was thinking about Miss Mallock and her father till he reached the door of the post office. He hurriedly despatched the telegram; and then, going on to his

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rooms, he felt an almost joyous relief in the knowledge that the matter was now settled, and that he need not bother about it any more.

Alone with his pipe and books that evening, he thought again of Long Moor House and its inmates, tracing and retracing the steady growth of his interest in all that concerned them during the last eight or nine months. It was wonderful, as slowly he analysed the plain fact, that his acquaintance with this family should have had so large a share in modifying all his views of Ewesland and the neighbourhood. They formed an incredibly large factor in the sum of causes that had reconciled him to his surroundings.

He was always pleased with an excuse to go to the house, and with or without an excuse he had been there so very often—counting recent visits, he was surprised by their number. But they had not been too many. Miss Mallock assured him that he was a most welcome guest; obviously she relied on him; he had, as he was pleased to believe, already succeeded in aiding her to bear the gloom and anxiety caused by her father.

General Mallock's state of health was an undoubtedly valid excuse for any number of visits; Bryant, faithfully attending to the case even when he seemed careless and unobservant, saw good grounds for uneasiness; but even if he were perfectly satisfied by the improved condition of his subtly interesting patient, could he now stay away from the house on the moor?

To-night this simple question presented itself to his mind for the first time. He would not answer it, he tried not to be forced to answer it; but in fencing with it and struggling to evade it, he broke through all his outer walls of self-deception and stood confronted with brightly illuminated truth.

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He knew and was now compelled to confess that what had really influenced him most in his deep-seated disinclination to leave Ewesland was the existence of a hitherto unavowed hope. The hope might still be faint and dim, but it was infinitely brighter and stronger than any ambitious longing for professional fame or fortune.

It had begun with that silly trick of day-dreaming, and by indulgence had grown into a complete infatuation. If she cared for him, if she ever could care just a little for him—and from the *if* he used to weave his dream.

After all, why not? Given time enough, the habit of mutual trust, similar views of life on all main points, a reciprocity of feeling in regard to all essentials—well, why not? It would be a waiting-game; but the pressure of surrounding circumstances would always be helping him. She was isolated, cut off from opportunities for the casual flirtations that lead to solid courtship. The normal procession of possible suitors that is intermittently passing before most girls' eyes never came her way. Marriage in the end might necessarily be for her a yielding and gliding along the lines of least resistance.

And so the foolish dream went on, moving him, changing him, colouring every hour of his life, and leaving her quite untouched.

He used to think that the chance of eventually winning her lay in the glorious fact that she was not an ordinary sort of girl. To him she seemed different from all other girls, free of commonplace cravings, not liking gaiety, altogether graver and more sedate; and he did not realize that he had never seen the manifestations of the lighter side of her temperament. With

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him she was always serious, because she never spoke to him except of serious things.

And the faint hope first born in the rainbow clouds of his dream seemed to nourish itself and expand with the materials supplied by his analysis of her character. She responded to every noble thought ; she abhorred all that was petty and mean—especially, and with intense delight, he noticed that she never expressed the kind of "opinions so natural to well-to-do people that their intrinsic snobbishness is frequently lost sight of. Not once had he heard from her lips one of those stereotyped phrases that imply respect for birth and rank by themselves, and contempt of the gentility or loftiness that only carries nature's stamp. Mollie, the frivolous and feather-headed, with smiling inadvertence, let fall such ugly little toads of speech ; but the perfect Kathleen shed only pearls.

She wasn't the sort of girl to turn shy of a man's humble birth or poor relations, if she ever cared for the man himself.

Once he had been thrilled and enraptured by the enthusiastic appreciation with which she spoke of a doctor's calling. There could be no mistake as to her genuineness ; you could not hear the clear ringing tone of her voice without the conviction that she meant what she said. The enthusiasm was real ; indeed so real that she seemed overcome by her strength of feeling, and abruptly stopped speaking, as if afraid of saying too much.

"If I were a man," and her eyes shone with candour and sincerity, "and I couldn't be a soldier, I would like to be a doctor. I think you are grand, you modern doctors. You go about from peril to peril ; you never consider risk to yourselves ; you are always fighting death and disease. . . . And that's the great thing

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in life, Dr. Bryant—to be fighting all the time, not quietly submitting"—Then she pulled herself up, flushed, and looked confused.

It did not occur to him that she had suddenly thought of an unlucky General who once submitted very quietly when the world would have wished to see him fighting his hardest.

"We do our best," said poor Dr. Bryant, in a dreadfully commonplace voice, and restraining his own blushes. "But I'm afraid we don't many of us deserve such a charming compliment as that."

"I know that *you* do your best," said Kathleen, and she hurriedly changed the subject of their conversation.

She hated herself for what she had said, and she did not want to give Bryant time to think it over and make the possible application to the family misfortune. She felt that Lord Keighley at his worst could not have blurted out anything more stupidly tactless. It made her alternately hot and cold when she thought that she might have said it in her father's presence.

But Bryant blindly fancied that her confusion sprang from something in the nature of maidenly modesty; he believed that she was regretting the splendid directness of the compliment she had just paid him.

This was glorious fuel for the roseate flames of his dream. Not the slightest trace of a prejudice against the medical profession—rather an intense admiration of it. As a man she would have been proud to call herself a doctor; then as a woman surely she would feel no repugnance to being a doctor's wife—supposing of course that she happened to like the man who was the doctor!

Once the dream received a terrible shaking. No possible suitors in this lost corner of a crowded universe—that was a kindness of fate on which he built with a

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sense of security. But what have we now? No suitor? Is not this a hulking big one?

Dr. Bryant was made miserable by dark fears that a rival had come upon the scene when he first began to hear Miss Mallock talk of frequent visits from the bulky lord of Redchurch. He was more uncomfortable still when he met Keighley at Long Moor House; he thought he could detect a very obvious inclination on the side of Keighley, and he scarcely dared to flatter himself that as yet the inclination was totally one-sided.

However, he was soon emancipated from such jealous pangs and ugly doubts. Kathleen spoke with a fine indignant scorn of this kindly but too bumptious nobleman; she turned from him to Bryant as to the true friend. "Get rid of Lord Keighley"—those whispered words of hers were sweet music to Dr. Bryant.

After this, he was rather sorry for Keighley, began to see merit in him, hoped that he had not set his heart on a happiness that could never be his. And several times he admired the magnanimous generosity of Kathleen as evidenced by her manner of defending Lord Keighley from what she supposed to be unjust criticism. She disliked him personally; and yet in his absence she stood up for him as an honest well-meaning person, whose conduct, if oafish, was nevertheless free of wrong intention.

And thus, while snow fell and keen winds blew, while the land lay shivering beneath the cruel grip of frost, Bryant was making himself more and more comfortable in his fool's paradise. Cold and rough weather were nothing to him; splendid though baseless hopes kept his blood coursing warmly and joyously; his clumsy little sledge and broken-kneed old pony seemed something better and grander than Keighley's dashing,

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jingling equipage—it was a triumphal car bearing him swiftly onward to the apotheosis of the dream.

His fireside was never quite empty to him now: a radiant shadow condescended to sit opposite to him; every evening when he put down his ponderously substantial book, and opened his arms in a gesture of yearning invitation, the shining ghost rose and advanced, drew nearer and nearer to him, so that when he closed his arms on emptiness it seemed impossible that there was really nothing there.

"He either fears his fate too much, or his deserts are small." . . . The dream flowed so deep and strong now that it was sweeping him far away from firm ground.

One day, when the frost showed signs of breaking and dark clouds began to roll up on a westerly wind, Bryant started his afternoon round throbbing with excitement.

He had formed a tremendous resolution. If luck favoured him and he could secure a few minutes alone with her, he intended to subject Kathleen to an ingeniously planned test. He would not prematurely hazard any declaration of his own feelings; but he would conclusively ascertain if she truly did care for him. It had come to him as an inspiration that he might achieve this end by very simple means. He would tell her now of that gratifying offer from his eminent medical friend; and, while leaving her in doubt as to its acceptance or rejection, he would infallibly detect how much or how little it mattered to her whether he stayed here or went away. This would be a sure test: he could scarcely fail to read the secret of her thought, even though she tried to hide it from him.

Luck was very kind to him, in so far as giving him a clear field for his interview. He found Miss Kathleen

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alone, and after their customary talk about the General he resolutely but nervously began to talk about himself.

"Come outside into the hall," said Kathleen. "If father heard our voices, perhaps it would make him wonder." And she led Bryant from the morning-room, and they stood together by the crackling logs in the hall. "Now please go on. I am all attention."

Then he fairly started the delicate test.

"Yes, yes," she said, with eager animation. "You think yourself that it is a really advantageous opening?"

"Yes, I do. But, Miss Mallock, I wish you'd tell me what *you* think."

"Oh, Doctor Bryant, how can my opinion on such a subject be of any value? It would be presumption for me to express an opinion."

"No," he said very gently, almost tremulously, "your opinion will help me—so please give it."

"Then indeed I will," she said cordially and frankly. "But first tell me some more. You can't tell me too much—it's so dreadfully important."

Pleasure brought the hot blood to his temples; his voice shook as he went on, describing the southern doctor's proposal, and the immense regret that he himself would feel in turning his back on Ewesland and the moors for ever.

"But, Doctor Bryant, you would have much wider scope down there, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes—plenty of scope, if that was all I wanted."

"There would be so many more opportunities for the development of your talent and skill—I mean; the experience, the hospital work, and your friend's big practice. Really, Dr. Bryant, it *does* sound very tempting."

She was looking at him, but he could not meet her

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eyes. Her whole face was bright and intent; she had contracted her eyebrows slightly—as she always did when thinking hard; and she spoke with an energy of friendly interest.

"Tempting!" he murmured. "Yet if I feel anything but tempted?"

"Of course you must know best. And, Doctor Bryant, you know how horribly we should miss you—and, I'm sure, everybody else too. You are so good to everyone—everyone praises you." She was speaking rapidly and enthusiastically now, and she stretched out her hand as if meaning to lay it on his arm; but then she checked herself, and for a few moments remained silent, looking thoughtfully at the fire. Then she raised her head, and spoke with firm decision. "Dr. Bryant, you ought to accept the offer. Yes, I do feel sure you ought. This is all very well—your life here: but it isn't good enough for you. Don't hesitate, but snatch the chance of doing bigger work."

"I like the work here, and I'm not going to leave it. Miss Mallock, I have already refused the offer."

"You *have* refused it?"

"Yes—emphatically."

"Then what are you asking me about? I don't understand."

"It was stupid of me," said Bryant feebly; "but I—I so much wished to know if you thought I had been right or wrong."

The pretty, thoughtful frown disappeared; her lips parted in a smile, and before she spoke she laughed gaily and contentedly.

"Then I think you are very unkind—to have kept me on tenterhooks like this."

"I—I'm sorry," he stammered; "but—but I wanted your unbiased opinion."

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" You shall never have it again, Doctor Bryant ; " and she looked at him with kind and most friendly eyes. " I'm simply delighted that you are not going to desert us. And since you have really made up your mind, I'll gladly admit it, I was almost praying that, in the end, you'd decide not to go."

" But—but you think I haven't acted wisely ? "

" No, I don't—not a bit. Of course you know best. I said so all along. Only, when you were enlarging on the various advantages—well, it would have been horribly selfish not to put oneself in your place, and try to shut out one's personal wishes ; " and again he saw her candid smile and heard her pleasant contented laugh. " I think you ought to say I rose to a great height of unselfishness—for I felt how fearfully we should all miss you."

He was watching her closely enough now ; but the warm blood had all descended from his face, and a despairing numbness made him feel at once limp and heavy and cold. It seemed to him that he had been listening to his death sentence.

" You flatter me," he mumbled, " by saying so."

" No," she said, cordially and firmly, " I never flatter. And I hope you understand my gratitude for your unfailing kindness."

The test had met with an overpoweringly definite success. No mistake as to the result was possible. She did not care a straw for him—that is, in the way of caring for which he had insanely hoped. Candid open friendship, respect for his capability, an exaggerated sense of benefit derived from his attention—these were the things which she could give him ; she gave them freely ; and if they both lived in the same neighbourhood for a thousand years, she would never have anything else to give him. The most conceited

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and infatuated male that ever breathed could not have misinterpreted the fatal meaning of her unruffled manner, her cheerful smile, her calm kind voice, her frank and steady eyes.

Dr. Bryant said a few words about the weather ; and then, with an apology for having wasted so much of her time, bade Miss Mallock good-bye.

" Yes, I think we shall soon get a change. . . . No, please don't trouble to ring. I can find my way out."

Externally he was just the same Dr. Bryant, going through the hall door, sitting beside his coachman in his queer little sledge, and gliding away over the softened snow ; but inwardly he was a man knocked to pieces, broken, done for. He felt cold and empty and profoundly wretched. It was as if, instead of administering a painless test, he had undergone a terrific operation without anaesthetics. All the romantic side of his life had been cut from him ; and he dully wondered if he could go on living in this mutilated condition.

The dark clouds covered the sky, the snow had lost its sparkling brightness, a damp chill wind was blowing ; the world looked dull and lifeless in the spreading dusk.

When he reached his door at the bottom of the slushy, mucky, hideous slate village, he found that commonplace and insipid Miss Purvis standing on the door-step.

" Oh, is that you, doctor ? " said Miss Purvis. " I've been waiting for you ; " and she giggled idiotically. " This is patience rewarded. So glad I've caught you."

" What can I do for you, Miss Purvis ? "

" Well, if it isn't too much trouble, can you kindly let me have another box of those pills for mother ?

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We've only one left—and you wrote on the label, two pills at night if required. I think mother would be all the better for a double dose this evening—or else I wouldn't have troubled you till the morning."

XV

THE thaw had come with continuous rain; every little brook was a muddy torrent while the wide snow field melted and slipped away from the hills; and day after day there was no break in the grey sky. Then at last the sun showed itself once more, and as February advanced the weather became mild and bright.

There was no excuse now for General Mallock to keep so much indoors; and yet it proved almost impossible to persuade him to leave the house.

"Well, yes, I'll think about it," he said languidly. "Yes, I shall probably take a stroll; but not now—later in the day."

"Won't you go for a ride this morning, father? It would do the horses good. Richards says they want exercise."

"Then let Richards exercise them," said the General wearily. "And you go, Kathleen dear. I shall get on very well by myself."

If, when the afternoon came, she reminded him of his intended walk, he would plead that he felt tired.

"Yes, I don't know how it is, but I am too tired to go out now, Kathleen—and yet I have been doing nothing. But I'll rest now. That will be better for me. . . . And tell them not to disturb me. I'll sleep if I can."

One morning when the sun shone gaily and the air was soft and warm, and she urged him persistently to

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come and walk with her, he made his refusal definite and final.

"Kathleen, don't bother me ;" and he spoke first fretfully, then angrily, and last of all plaintively and sadly. "Can't you leave me more to my own devices ? Don't guide me and direct me as if I had no choice or will. Can't you see that I get on best when I'm not interfered with ? If the spirit moves me I'll take a stroll after you are gone—by myself."

"But, father, I love being with you—and I hate your being so much alone."

"It suits me best. Sometimes one's thoughts are the only company one can enjoy."

"Very well, father. Only, you know, Dr. Bryant said that——"

Then came the tone of anger.

"Kathleen, you mustn't encourage Dr. Bryant to worry me. I can't allow him or anyone else to come fussing and prying round and round me in narrowing circles. I must have unchallenged freedom. I won't submit to any tyranny—not even the tyranny of your love."

"But, father, he only advises, and I only beg——"

"Very well," and the unreasonable anger, fading, changed to sadness. "You are all that you should be, my dear. And no doubt Bryant is right—though perhaps disposed to obtrude his views. A good fellow—but too fussy. . . . And now about these walks and rides ! No object in them, Kathleen ;" and he looked at her very sadly and wistfully. "That's why they would bore me now. No object ! Why ? Where ? What for ? To pass from point to point through space in objectless effort only enervates and depresses one."

No object to draw him out of the house and out of himself—this was painfully true. But Kathleen thought

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with satisfaction that a small though sufficient object would soon be provided for him. Soon he would be going into Bevistown to take his seat on the bench of magistrates ; the sense of authority and responsibility, the feeling that he had been given some useful work to do, would cheer and enliven him ; she and Mollie would drive with him, and coming home he would talk of the day's cases, tell them of magisterial decisions, laugh about comic witnesses and the absurd conflict of self-interested evidence. He would be occupied innocently and pleasantly—and the need for occupation was what Dr. Bryant always harped upon. More and more she counted on the success of the scheme with her influential ally.

But while waiting for the good news that Keighley confidently promised as now close at hand, she must obey her father and cease to worry him.

So henceforth he sat for long hours unmolested at his bureau. He muddled with household accounts, read and endorsed old letters, played with tape-strings, sealing wax, and gum-brushes—but never by any chance opened the secret place that held his buried book. It was just a busy idleness, a musing silence, a half-waking, half-dozing pause.

Then one day—towards the middle of February—Kathleen saw that he was writing again ; and he told her with a placid smile that he had begun to make notes.

"Something for me to copy or typewrite ? "

"No, dear, not yet. Too chaotic at present. But perhaps later—"

"What sort of notes, father ? Not biographical ? "

"No, dear—no ! " and he smiled, as if tickled by his thoughts. "I am trying to see if I can make a few little fables. Having come to grief as a historian,

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I'd like to see if I can do anything in a lighter vein."

"Will you let me read your notes?"

"I'll read them to you—perhaps. But not now, Let me get on now;" and he spoke as if to himself. "Symbolism! Yes, that was the method at the dawn of every literature—if the world won't bear the truth in plain words, it will often accept it in fancy dress. Symbolism—proverbs, fables, fairy tales!"

Lord Keighley at this time of bright days and balmy airs was in a very happy sunshiny frame of mind. The winter was passing, his anxieties had disappeared, he saw before him no prospect that did not look pleasantly inviting.

All was quiet at the quarries; scarcely a murmur had been heard when the re-established manager again took up the reins of government; the work went on under Mr. Gilchrist more smoothly than he himself had ventured to anticipate.

"Now suppose," said Keighley, standing again on the Mallocks' hearth-rug and beaming genially at Kathleen, "suppose I had put up with all their nonsense, what a fool I should have felt by now! Dozens of people told me I'd never know peace or quiet if I didn't chuck Gilchrist overboard."

"I'm very glad it has ended so well."

"So am I. But I do think it's a feather in my cap. I let them know from the beginning that I didn't intend to put up with nonsense, and little by little they found out that I mean what I say. If I hadn't been firm—if they had seen me vacillating and shilly-shallying—I honestly believe that we should have had a deuce of a row."

He was entirely cock-a-hoop, paying compliments to

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himself, artlessly seeking compliments from others ; altogether so well pleased with himself and the universe that his satisfaction brimmed over rather exuberantly.

Once, when speaking of those fifty-three dismissed men who had been the original cause of the past disturbances, he told Kathleen that, having got the better of everybody, he was disposed to be generous in the hour of triumph.

"I'll tell you what ;" and he pointed his finger at her. "Now that the crowd have submitted so quietly and sensibly, I've half a mind to take back the fifty-three."

"Oh, have a whole mind," said Kathleen enthusiastically. "Do it. That would be really nice of you."

"Do you wish it ?" And, smiling, he looked down at her with benignant sentimentality. "Is it a request or a command ?"

"Neither," said Kathleen, getting up from her chair ; and she went across the room and glanced out of the window.

"Well," said Keighley, still smiling sentimentally, "call it a hint. And hints, you know, when they come from certain exalted personages are tantamount to orders ;" and then he laughed jovially, pleased by the turn of his phrase. "I'll discuss it with Gilchrist, and we'll endeavour to obey you."

"I see Mollie in the garden," said Kathleen, looking out of the window, and speaking as though this was a strange and interesting sight. "Mollie !" She opened the casement and called to her sister. "Come in. Lord Keighley is here."

Mollie had lately developed a silly and rather embarrassing trick. She secretly, or even ostentatiously, withdrew when this visitor arrived, and usually kept

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out of the way until the visit terminated. It seemed to her that Kathleen and the visitor were on exceedingly good terms, understanding each other admirably, always having so much to talk about ; and that the presence of a third conversationalist could not be really requisite to the comfort of either of them.

She only laughed and assumed the dowager manner when Kathleen reproached her for continued desertion.

" My dear Kathleen, although I am ever a stickler for conventional correctness of behaviour, I have such confidence in your discretion that I relax all rules where you are concerned. Again, Lord Keighley's age reassures me. If he were some flighty foolish lad, I should be much more careful."

This little speech, with some impudent laughter, was Mollie's only answer to reproaches.

But it was Mollie who insisted on accepting Keighley's invitation to Redchurch Park.

" Now that I have nothing on my mind," said his lordship hospitably, " I shall be so glad if you will all come over to luncheon. Any day you like. The sooner the better."

Kathleen thought it impossible to accept ; Lord Keighley was very kind ; but her father, she feared, would not feel up to it.

" Why not ? The weather's so jolly. It will do him good."

" Of course it will," said Mollie, boldly intervening. " It will do him good, and it will do us good. I'm sure it will do me the greatest good."

" Bravo," cried Keighley. " Miss Mollie, you're a trump ; " and he turned to Kathleen with urgent entreaty. " Do arrange it. You've never seen the house."

" No," said Mollie, " we have never seen it, have we ? "

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"And I want you to see it," said Keighley, looking at Kathleen.

"And we all want to see it," said Mollie.

"May I go in and ask your father now? I'm sure I can persuade him. We won't make a party of it—only just ourselves. Let me go in and tackle the General now."

"Yes, Kathleen, do let him go in," said Mollie. "Lord Keighley is so very persuasive—father won't be able to refuse *him*."

Kathleen, however, loyally guarded the door of the inner room, and would not allow her father to be disturbed. But she promised to use every endeavour to persuade him herself.

"Perhaps if you would let us come to tea instead of luncheon—that might be easier for father."

"Then let it be tea. But come early, so that there'll be time for me to show you all my little articles of bigotry and virtue," and his lordship laughed cheerily. "Learned amateurs are good enough to admire some of the pictures."

This was the only excursion undertaken by General Mallock for many weeks. Very reluctant at first, he allowed himself to be persuaded—but it was Mollie again, and not Kathleen, who brought to bear the persuasive force that finally decided him.

"Keighley is most amiable," he murmured gloomily; "but why cannot people leave one alone? Why must they be always bothering and worrying one with unsought civilities?"

"Dad," said Mollie piteously, "we don't get too many of them;" and she put her arm round his neck caressingly. "Screw yourself up to it for this once."

"You—you want to go, Mollie dear?"

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"Yes, dad, of course I do. And we can't go without you—or we wouldn't trouble you."

"My poor Mollie;" and he looked up from his desk. "I fear—yes, I fear you find life dull and empty."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that;" and Mollie laughed. "But it isn't *wildly* exciting; so any little change is rather nice—once in a way, you know, dad."

"Yes, yes. Then I won't be selfish. Settle it with Kathleen."

XVI

THUS one afternoon they drove through the big gateway, and for the first time had a close view of the formal lawns and stone balustrades, the classic front and columned porch of Redchurch.

"Kath," said Mollie, as the carriage drew up before the solemnly dignified entrance, "it's rather like the ogre's castle. I feel nervous already. What a bell!"

Frederick pealing the door bell raised clanging echoes, and a deep-voiced hound gave tongue as in challenge from a distance.

The hall produced an impression of vastness and grandeur—marble pavement, fireplace looking like the highly ornamented entrance of a railway tunnel, heavily carved table with colossal vases, gilded lantern hanging on chains from incredible heights. Then, before one could notice anything more, Keighley came hurrying to receive his guests.

"So glad to see you. Let me take your wraps. . . . General, this is very kind of you. . . . Come along."

He was proud of his house, and he led them from

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room to room as if thoroughly determined that they should enjoy a complete inspection.

"Here now. This is what they used to call the music saloon—it's a long time since anybody made any music in it. Not a bad room, is it, General? Do all right for dances, wouldn't it, Miss Mollie?"

"Rather," said Mollie, with conviction.

"Have a look at the pictures. . . . The two young women by Reynolds—and genuine, I believe. That's a Gainsborough. . . . And this is our famous Van Dyck. We *call* it a Van Dyck, don't you know. Somebody said it was by Dobson—his pupil. Somebody else said it was a copy—valueless, devoid of merit. But *he* must have been a bounder to say a thing like that;" and Keighley laughed in high good humour. "Come along."

Mollie, while looking at the pictures, heard him speak to her sister confidentially.

"Of course all the decorations are faded. This room sadly needs redecorating. In fact the whole house wants doing up. It hasn't been touched for years."

Mollie was secretly amused and delighted by observing how the host especially appealed to Kathleen for her praise or criticism. Indeed it became increasingly obvious that, though all three of the guests were desired to admire, it was the good opinion of one of their number which was particularly craved for.

"Now this is what I always call a jolly cheerful room," and Keighley ushered them into quite a charming boudoir.

Here there was less of state and more of prettiness—water-colour drawings on green satin walls, beautiful old French furniture, bookcases and china cupboards, comfortable chintz-covered sofas; and from the tall

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narrow windows one looked down upon the terraces and flower-beds of the real garden. The lawns and balustrades were merely for pomp. But this was the real thing.

"It's a livable friendly sort of room—isn't it, Miss Kathleen?"

"Yes," said Kathleen, "it is very nice indeed."

She gave her opinion guardedly. These especial inquiries were making her shy and nervous.

"The green hangings are old-fashioned, aren't they?"

"I don't know. They look all right."

"Do they?" asked Keighley doubtfully. "But, as I say, everything has been here for ages. It all wants changing."

So they passed from room to room—Keighley, like a professional guide or an auctioneer's assistant, leading the way with Kathleen; Mollie, smiling as if immensely diverted, purposely hanging back with her father; and the General, who was absent-minded, silent, pitifully bored, moving very slowly.

"Here we have the small drawing-room. That's a Romney! My aunt used this room when she was here."

"Yes?"

Kathleen noticed that he spoke of the beaky dowager in the past tense; and some tone of his voice seemed to convey an idea that he was not expecting the return of his aunt after the sojourn at Mentone, in fact that he did not intend her ever to use the room again.

"And now," he said, opening a door, and smiling at Kathleen, "this is my very own den;" and with an air of naive satisfaction he ushered them into the library. "This is more your style, General. Plenty of books here."

"Books! Ah, yes," said General Mallock, looking

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about him vaguely. "Yes—you have a great number of books, Keighley—my dear fellow."

"Yes, I only wish I troubled 'em more. If you see any that you'd care to take away with you, please do."

"Thank you, Keighley—but, ah, no. I—yes, I'm like you. More books than I can find time to read."

Keighley drew attention to his writing-table, and pointed out its neat and orderly appearance.

"I think I'm tidy by nature. No small vices ;" and he laughed again. "I assure you that sometimes when I'm sitting there, I am snowed up with papers. But then I won't go until I have polished off the lot of 'em. If I have to sit all day, I do it. I don't leave an unanswered letter—the table is as empty as it is now before I can feel comfortable, and get up and go."

"Ah," said General Mallock, "you are to be envied. With me things accumulate. Yes, on my desk there is a tendency to chaos—important letters hide themselves."

Between the bookcases there were panels with family portraits by dubious masters. A red coat in one of these dim canvases seemed to attract the General ; he stood before it thoughtfully scrutinizing the gold and vermillion of this dead soldier's uniform, the star and sash of a knightly order, and the conventionally painted battlefield for background—smoke clouds of war with sunlight shining high overhead.

"That old chap," said Keighley, "went all through the Peninsular campaigns. Some sort of connection of ours. I forget what. . . . Now look here. Miss Mollie, these ought to amuse you."

He had opened one of several portfolios on large stands, and he pulled out some old coloured prints.

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" My uncle was a collector of this sort of thing. There are piles of engravings shoved away somewhere or other. Look through this lot, Miss Mollie. See the costumes of our grandmothers' time. General, you ought to glance at these."

Then he conducted Kathleen to the far end of the long room, and showed her a cabinet of coins and medals in the embrasure of a window. He was quite a busy showman, bringing out gold pieces of Edward the Fourth, copper tokens of Roman emperors, what not archæologically interesting ; but while exhibiting these treasures he spoke in a low voice, and soon he seemed to be murmuring about matters even more interesting than dug-up battered money.

At least Mollie, shooting sly glances at the distant window, fancied so. She disregarded Kathleen's efforts to break up the tête-à-tête, and prolonged her study of the queer old prints, keeping the General at her side and insisting that he should study them too.

" Mollie ! " Kathleen had called to her again. " Come and look at Lord Keighley's coins."

" We are looking at his prints," said Mollie. " They're too sweet for words. Father, isn't that sweet ? "

General Mallock did not answer. He saw, and yet did not seem to see ; he stood with his hands clasped behind his back, stooping languidly over the portfolio, silent, bored, but meekly submitting.

" Oh, father ! Did people ever wear such coats ? "

" I wonder. Ah—yes, I wonder ; " and he sauntered away from the portfolio, went back to the dingy portrait of the red-coat, and stood staring at the painted sash and star worn by the dead man who had been through all those smoke-clouds in the Peninsula with Wellington.

" Father," said Kathleen, presently coming from the

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far-off window, "Lord Keighley says we are to have tea now."

Keighley following her looked perhaps a trifle crest-fallen, as though the window conversation had ended too soon or not ended exactly as he wished; but he promptly rallied himself to cheerfulness, and, ceasing to be showman, played his part of host very good-humouredly.

"Yes, tea. Come along. We're to have tea in the dining-room—a regular sit-down school-room tea. . . . This way, ladies and gentlemen. Miss Mollie, I have ordered jam, and heaps of cakes—but I never get such jolly cakes here as you give me up at your place."

Nevertheless the tea, as served at a round table in the solemnly grand dining-room, was worthy of Yorkshire and a Yorkshire nobleman's mansion. A preposterous amount of food, and lots of pretty things to look at—old Worcester china, Queen Anne silver, cut glass preserve dishes; no real need for apologies, although his lordship did apologise profusely for not being able to supply any hot-house fruit for the feast.

"Ought to have strawberries by now, of course," he said. "But my gardeners are hopeless rotters—swear it's the fault of the climate, when I rag them. I don't see what the dickens the climate has got to do with it—I mean under glass. I'm sure they burn enough coals in the hot-house to make any climate they want."

"I'm afraid you're not much of a gardener yourself," said Kathleen, smiling at him shyly but kindly.

"No, I suppose I'm not. You must teach—I mean, I've never been taught gardening."

He had made Kathleen preside at the tea-table; and, as the servants passed in and out of the room, Mollie fancied that she saw them steal every chance

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for a discreetly rapid investigation of the young lady who had been set in charge of the tea-pot.

Keighley escorted his guests as far as and farther than the outer door. He stood on the steps beneath the columned portico, waving his hand while their carriage drove away.

"Good-bye," Mollie kept saying, as she, too, freely waved. "Thank you so much, Lord Keighley. You can't hear me, but good-bye once again. Good-bye, dear Lord Keighley."

When they had left the iron gates behind them and were bowling along the high road, she turned to her sister and asked a question very pointedly.

"Do you like the house, Kathleen?"

"Oh, yes—to a certain extent."

"I mean, do you think it could be made all right if it was thoroughly done up?" and Mollie laughed. "You can get wonderfully nice wall papers nowadays, if you don't care for satin hangings."

"I wish you wouldn't be so silly," and Kathleen glanced at her father.

But General Mallock was not listening. He stared ahead at the straight road, the bare trees, the rising hills, hearing nothing and seeing nothing, lost in thought.

"Well," whispered Mollie, "as a chaperon, I'm glad we came. It all seemed to me *most* satisfactory."

XVII

THE last week of February brought a crushing disappointment to Kathleen.

Idly looking through the local paper, she read the odious news. The new magistrates had been appointed; and, after all, her father was not one of them.

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"Our fellow townsmen," said this abject rag, "will feel gratification in reading the well-known and respected names of the five gentlemen who have just been added to the Commission of the Peace." Then followed fulsome biographical notes about the five gentlemen. "Mr. Hollings, as the owner of extensive cloth mills, has done much for the industrial community; Colonel Vincent of Clowston Hall has prominently exerted himself in fostering the welfare of the Territorial force throughout the Riding; Major Armstrong of Howley is also an army officer, and having served his country in the field is eminently qualified for the judicial position which he is now to occupy"—and so on, sycophantic praise for every one of them.

Would there have been praise for the sixth magistrate, if his name had figured in the list? Yes, thought Kathleen, he too would probably have received kind words and compliments; the fact that he had been recognized as the equal of these other men and worthy of the same honour would have sufficed for the newspaper writer. Such people are accustomed to take their opinions ready-made: they would hold anybody in esteem who apparently was esteemed by the chieftains of the neighbourhood and the rulers of the land.

But how had Keighley failed so miserably—after his confident talk? Only the other day he grandiloquently assured her that she need not worry; it would certainly be all right. From the first he had spoken of six magistrates; recently he had told her that six were to be nominated; but now at the very last moment it seemed that six proved one too many. The wretches had scratched out the name of General Mallock.

Then, as she thought of the rejected one, hot tears filled her eyes and streamed down her cheeks until pride and indignation helped her to check them. What a

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disgusting shame! And she thought with yearning tenderness of her father. It was cruel—most cruel—that brutal prejudice should have deprived her of this chance of secretly assisting him. It had made her so happy to believe that by her bold insistence she would win for him what was due to him—the common sign of respect given so freely to almost every country gentleman. Such a small thing, really a nothing, but to him valuable and welcome as a slight solace after unnumbered humiliations. And yet it had been denied him. *Brutes!* He was old, but they would not honour him. He was feeble and ailing, but they did not pity his weakness. Much as he had suffered, if they could make him suffer a little more, they would do it.

Fortunately he had known nothing of Lord Keighley's unsuccessful efforts on his behalf. It was Kathleen who felt the wound and the disappointment. To her it seemed almost as heavy a rebuff as the return of the book.

On this too she had built such hopes. Her pride, her affection, and all sorts of other feelings personal to herself and not drawn from filial duty, were wrapped up with her anticipation of success. The gross failure of her ally in this matter seemed as if logically and inevitably it must shatter her faith with regard to every other matter. How could Lord Keighley have made such a mess of it?

All her thoughts about him grew cold and colourless, just when they had been at their warmest and brightest. A stupid man really—always one was driven back to the ugly fact. He was too much absorbed by himself and his own affairs ; he was too self-satisfied to be of any use to anybody except himself ; doubtless he had tried to please her, but he had not tried hard enough. He had *asked* for this little favour ; but he had not

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gone out and *fought* for it. Perhaps it was a temperamental fault—he did not understand that when a man desires a thing he must go on fighting till he wins it. Opposition must be overcome; resistance must be beaten down. But no, Lord Keighley seemed to believe that he himself was of such paramount importance that he need only ask—ask at his own good time, perhaps after delays, hesitations, and languid self-communings,—and he would surely obtain everything he wished for.

He was altogether too well pleased with the great Lord Keighley, his position in the world, his wealth and belongings—Kathleen's thoughts turned colder and more contemptuous. “This is my house”—she very unkindly gave him words for the expression of a boastful contentment. “This is my fine large house; these are the portraits of the lords and ladies my ancestors; these, and many others whom you don't see, are my obedient servants. And this, ladies and gentlemen, is the fortunate young person who one day may be admitted to my august family as a connection by marriage.”

She had been nursing her disappointment and mortification for a day and night before she heard from Keighley. Then the post brought a letter in which he explained his failure and deprecated her wrath. She felt softened, and her thoughts grew kinder as she read the first two or three sentences; but then came some clumsy turns, with one most unlucky phrase; and by the time she reached the end of the letter she was again plunged into sadness and indignation.

“I do trust that you will not blame me for what has occurred. I am more sorry than I can say. . . .”

His humbleness and his regret touched her, and made her eyes glow.

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"I did all that was possible, and I had every reason to hope that in spite of considerable difficulties it would be all right. . . ."

She did not like this. His manner of harping on the difficulties of his task was supremely tactless. But then came something worse.

"I fear that my championship of your father's claims was discounted by the obstructive efforts of other people. You see, the professional feeling is so strong among soldiers; and I feared all along that if Colonel Vincent and Major Armstrong were consulted, it would be all up. . . ."

"Anyhow I did all I could with the big-wigs; but they must have been persuaded behind my back that it would not do. . . ."

"I assure you that I almost went down on my knees, begging it as a personal favour. And truly you must not blame me because it proved more than they could swallow."

That was an unpardonable phrase. It made her flush hotly and then burst into tears. More than they could swallow! Her chivalrous, gentle, noble father—the man who was intrinsically worth a hundred commonplace, narrow-minded lord lieutenants and lord chancellors.

"I will come over," Keighley concluded, "tomorrow afternoon about four o'clock, and I hope to have a long quiet talk with you. Once more, don't be angry with me."

At four o'clock she was wearing her jacket and hat, waiting for him in the hall. When he rang the door bell she went through the porch to meet him.

"I was going out, Lord Keighley. Will you come for a stroll in the garden?"

"Oh, yes, anywhere you like—so that I can get you all to myself for a bit."

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He was in his gamekeeper costume ; and he stood with his head slightly on one side, looking at her very admiringly, as she crossed the threshold.

"I am quite at liberty till tea-time."

"Capital," said Keighley, following her along the path towards the meadow where the last remains of the rifle-range still made ugly ridges and bare patches.

Mollie upstairs in her room saw them walk away side by side ; and presently, passing through the gallery above the hall, she took another peep at them.

In the gallery there were three small circular windows, like port-holes, from which one could command a wide view without disclosing oneself to observation ; and Mollie for a few minutes watched the promenading couple with inquisitive but entirely sympathetic interest.

There is always something rather ridiculous in the aspect of two people engaged in animated conversation when one cannot hear a word that they are saying. Their movements seem so mechanical, as of marionettes worked by strings ; they stop short, turn towards each other, and then walk on, to stop and turn again directly the discussion or argument reaches another exciting climax ; and there is so much more gesture than they themselves are conscious of employing. Mollie had an amused smile on her face all the time that she was looking out of the window. Lord Keighley, who seemed when one sat in the same room with him to be so stolid and quiescent, was now pantomimically and grotesquely gesticulating. He waved his arms, he slapped his chest, he struck his right fist into his left palm—really like a platform orator or an open-air preacher enforcing the rhetorical points of his discourse ; and graceful reserved Kathleen tossed her head, shook it in violent negatives or affirmatives, shrugged

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her shoulders again and again, and once distinctly stamped her foot.

Suddenly Mollie's bright young face became glum and serious. Could they possibly be quarrelling out there, instead of being merely carried away by the pleasant interest of their confidential chat? Mollie left the window. It seemed wrong to watch them any more.

Half an hour later O'Kelly, having opened the hall door, beat the gong with prolonged vigour. This was his invariable method of intimating to stragglers that rations were about to be served out.

Tea was ready in the morning-room and Mollie was waiting anxiously; but neither Keighley nor Kathleen paid any attention to O'Kelly's noisy summons.

At last Kathleen returned to the house. Mollie heard her footstep in the hall and on the stairs; but she heard no other footsteps, and no loudly jovial voice. Kathleen had returned alone, had hurried up to her room, and locked the door.

"Kathleen, mayn't I come in?"

"No, please don't bother."

"Shall I bring you up some tea?"

"No, thank you. I don't want anything. If father asks for me, say I have a headache. . . . I'll be all right by dinner-time."

She would not unlock the door, and her sister roamed about the house disconsolately. Poor old Kathleen! Then it *was* a quarrel.

Kathleen duly appeared at the dinner-table, looking very pale and, as Mollie thought, very unhappy too. But she talked cheerfully, and assured the General that her headache had now quite passed off.

When bedtime came, Mollie tried to ascertain the precise cause of this transient headache.

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"Let me sit with you now."

"No, I'm too tired. Good-night, Mollie."

"Kathleen, do tell me what has happened."

"Nothing has happened."

"Why didn't Lord Keighley stay to tea? . . . Kath, when shall we see him again?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Never, perhaps."

"Oh, *why*?"

"He told me that he is going to London to-morrow. Now that he isn't wanted here any longer, he is able to get away."

"But, Kath, isn't he wanted here?"

"No."

"Are you *sure* he isn't wanted?"

"Quite."

"Dear old Kath, I'm sorry."

"You—you needn't be sorry," said Kathleen. There was a catch in her voice as she said it; and she turned quickly, went into her room, and shut the door. Mollie heard the lock move; and as the key worked, there came a sound very like suppressed sobbing.

XVIII

BUT Lord Keighley did not go to London. He had been out in all his reckonings. All that he had counted on as secure had gone to water.

Next morning his three quarries were as silent as the grave; the vast slate walls rested sombrely tranquil in the sunlight; not a single man came down to attack their black ridged depths. It was a general strike; a heavy thunderstorm bursting from a serenely clear sky.

Just when my lord had been patting himself on the

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back, craving compliments for his combined cleverness and firmness as master, all these hundreds of quiet men had been slowly making up their minds for contest instead of peace. And now, setting their Trade Union at defiance, they laid aside their working tools and threw down the challenge for strife.

By mid-day his lordship received their ultimatum. He was peremptorily called upon to dismiss Mr. Gilchrist, and until he had done so not a man of the lot could or would go back to work.

Perhaps they had honestly tried to work under the detested manager; perhaps they had found very gradually that their passionate feeling of resentment was too strong to permit them to continue working under him; perhaps they had been desirous of drawing as much pay as possible to fill their meagre war chest; perhaps they had artfully waited until the stress of winter was past, and delayed the declaration of war until climatic conditions were more favourable for a campaign. But anyhow, as little Donaldson said, "the fat was in the fire now, with a vengeance."

During the next two days there were such monster demonstrations as set the whole country-side trembling. Daylight and torchlight processions filled Bevistown and terrified its citizens. The shops were closed for twenty-four hours at a time; business was impossible in the market-place; cattle-drivers and market gardeners would not venture themselves among so ugly-looking a crowd. It was said that the mayor had incensed the strikers by reading the Riot Act to them; they vowed that they were acting strictly in accordance with their rights; they were demonstrating, just demonstrating after a most orderly and proper manner.

Above all else the shop-keepers dreaded the flaming

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torches. One night a panic shook the hearts of the staunchest householders. Someone rushed through the streets, shouting that all sleepers must awake and save themselves; the strikers intended to set fire to the whole town.

Police were drafted in from York, Leeds, and Hull; but the civil arm of the law, even when thus strengthened, seemed impotent to cope with the increasing difficulties of the situation. Policemen charging, and at last using batons, were almost overpowered one evening. But next morning Bevistown was delightfully quiet. Then in the afternoon, while these same policemen paraded the empty streets with a triumphant air, news arrived that they had been urgently needed in another place.

Led by a man named McGaher, a party of strikers had revisited the deserted scene of their labours. At the silent quarries rails had been torn from the inclined planes; drums, break-wheels, and trucks had been hurled into the yawning pit; and the sheds on two stages had been blown up with blasting-powder.

After this the man McGaher became the acknowledged leader of the strike; and within a week from its beginning Bevistown had been made famous by the attention of the newspaper press. It was a leading feature, and graphic writers made the most of it. Terrible state of affairs; a town terrorised; mob-rule—and so on. Questions about it were asked in Parliament. Was the Right Honourable gentleman aware? etc. And what measures, if any, did he propose to take? etc., etc., etc.

No echo of the noise raised in the streets of Bevistown reached as far as Long Moor House. The mild weather continued; every day the sun shone brighter

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and stronger ; and nothing broke the sunlit peace of the moor, except joyous cries of birds awakening to the business of love.

The Miss Mallocks, walking or driving, sometimes met a few of the idle quarrymen, who lounged outside cottage doors, who smoked pipes in the sunshine, with children playing about the dusty roadway, and who touched their caps politely to the young ladies passing by. It seemed absurd, after meeting these quiet good-humoured strikers, to read in the London newspapers of their massed movements, their concerted purposes, and their dire threats.

Things seen from a distance often look bigger than they are ; probably most exaggerated accounts of the disturbances had been telegraphed by local correspondents ; and metropolitan editors, having taken up the Bevistown Strike, were now running it for all it was worth.

" Did ye ever hear the like of it ? " said O'Kelly. " All in a minnit here's Lord Keighley becomin' one o' the most prom'nt gentlemen in the wurr'l'd. Why, 'tis nothing but his lordship now—the papers are full of him."

O'Kelly was an avid newspaper reader, and he seemed gratified by seeing a neighbour's name so often in print ; but he considered the strike a trumpery affair, and spoke contemptuously of those who were treating it at once too seriously and too feebly.

" Oi've no patience, Miss Mollie, with that Mayor and those fellows at Bevistown. 'Tis just a storm in a tea-cup ; and they're dancing round like a pack of frightened old women. Talk, talk—why don't they do something ? "

" What would *you* do, O'Kelly ? "

" Well, miss, I'd clap that ugly lout into gaol—

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what's his name again?—McGaher—I'd lay *him* by the heels first thing. And then I wouldn't be long in sending the rest of 'em to the right about. I'd give 'em a demonstration."

"The police don't seem able——"

"The *police!*" said O'Kelly, with intense contempt.

"What's the good of the police?"

"Ah," said Mollie, "you'd like to see some soldiers behind the police?"

O'Kelly shrugged his shoulders.

"I had a cousin in the Metropolitan police, Miss—they're a very respectable set of men, and oi've nothing to say against the country force either. But when ye get a rale crowd come pushing up against ye what I call impudent—well, there's nothing makes 'em move their feet backwards so quick and sure as the butt ends of a few rifles dropped down on 'em."

"Oh," said Mollie, "you mean infantry. Lord Keighley said they ought to send cavalry."

"Well, and oi've no objection to cavalry either. They cud scour round and put a stop to any more racketting about at the quarries. There was a pretty thing, miss—couple o' thousand pounds worth o' damage, and the authorities just sitting down on it."

Mollie was deeply interested in this matter of providing military assistance for Lord Keighley and the town. She eagerly studied the correspondence and reports of each day's newspaper, and she excitedly told her sister of more questions in the House of Commons.

Surely the Right Honourable gentleman must be aware that a whole district was now given over to a state akin to open rebellion? And in these unprecedented circumstances could he not inform the House as to the measures he was taking?

The Right Honourable gentleman, replying with

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urbanity, said that he was fully cognisant of everything throughout the length and breadth of the realm ; but as to this particular corner of it, he believed that nothing very unusual was occurring there. At present he saw no reason for interference in this unfortunate dispute ; but, should the necessity arise, he would take strong measures to curb disorder. Indeed it would then be his plain duty to do so, etc., etc.

"O'Kelly says they talk like a lot of old women, and that they ought to get some soldiers at once. Don't you think they ought to, Kathleen ? "

But Kathleen had no opinion to offer, either way. She seemed to have grown languid, sad, and continuously preoccupied ; household cares absorbed her ; duties that till lately had been performed by her father now entirely devolved on her.

She said she hoped that the strike would soon come to an end ; she trusted that Lord Keighley would find some means of satisfying the men ; but, as Mollie noticed, she spoke of Lord Keighley as little as possible. He had completely fallen back to the rank of a casual acquaintance. The friend and ally had vanished out of their life.

Mollie was stirred with affectionate regret as she watched the sad dull expression of her sister's face. Nothing made Kathleen laugh now. The result of that conversation in the garden, whether inevitable or avoidable, showed most distressing after effects on poor old Kath's spirits. It had made her take everything with dreadful seriousness, and the most delightfully exciting news failed to elate her.

One morning Mollie, picking up her letters in the hall, was fluttered by the sight of the York post-mark ; she tore open the envelope, and after reading the letter she rushed shouting to her sister's room.

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"Kathleen, they are coming. They are coming to-day;" and she waved the letter ecstatically.

"Who are coming? What do you mean?"

"The Twelfth! Two squadrons of them! Under Major Grinling.—And isn't it unlucky? Major Grinling is about the only one I don't know.—Never mind. I know the others. He is bringing his wife. I never saw her. I wonder what she's like. Two squadrons! Oh, won't O'Kelly be glad to hear it!"

And then, in the midst of this glorious excitement, Kathleen was ready to spoil everything by her heavy serious thoughts.

"How do you know all this?" she asked gravely.
"Who is it who has written to you?"

"Mr. Cartwright, of course."

But Kathleen did not think there was any "of course" about it; she could not understand why Mr. Cartwright should venture to write letters to her sister.

"Oh," said Mollie cheerfully, "I ventured to write to him first."

"Then, Mollie, you really oughtn't to have done that."

"Why not? I just sent him a line saying there was talk of his regiment coming over, and that if they did come, we hoped we should see him out here."

"We hoped?"

"Well, I then. What does it matter? Kathleen, you don't really think it wrong, do you? I should hate him to suppose that I was over keen about seeing him again."

"But what else can he suppose?"

For a few minutes Mollie's exultation was banished by uncomfortable doubts. She confessed that she herself had felt qualms, and feared that Mr. Cartwright might think it rather odd—more especially because he had left her letter such a long time unanswered.

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But now, she said, he explained the delay. He had been away on leave, and had only now returned—summoned to rejoin the regiment for duty.

"Kathleen, don't throw cold water on me. He writes so nicely ; " and, as she said this, she became quite cheerful again. "He's awfully nice ; not a bit conceited—you know what I mean, not inclined to fancy that people are going to fall in love with him ; " and she laughed. "Oh, Kathleen, don't look so gloomy. Do remember that I'm very young and inexperienced."

"Yes," said Kathleen sadly, "that's exactly what I am remembering."

"But if I find him in the least uppish, I'll be very stand-offish—I'll be most careful to snub him if he wants snubbing. But he won't want it. . . . Kathleen, you'll quite approve of him when you see him. . . . And he may come out to luncheon, mayn't he—some day soon ?"

Then Kathleen delivered a very serious little lecture. She told her young sister, with great wisdom, of how terribly important a thing it is for a girl when she allows herself to become attached to a man. At such a time the happiness of one's whole life hangs in the balance ; the utmost prudence is necessary, or one may drift from light and frivolous thoughts into a zone of deep feeling ; every girl, however young, should hold herself very tight in hand when considering the possibility of giving away the absolute control of her affections.

"Kath," said Mollie, gently and soothingly, "you speak like a book—only I wish it wasn't such a sad book ; " and she kissed her sister. "I mean for your sake, not for mine. You wouldn't have talked to me quite like this a fortnight ago. . . . There, don't be angry. I understand, dear old girl."

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Later in the morning she came to her sister again, and said that she had a great favour to ask.

"Kathleen, do let us agree to treat Mr. Cartwright and the Twelfth as a comedy and not as a tragedy. . . . I know I'm a wretch, but I simply can't live up to your high level. Sometimes I feel as if the dullness of our life was killing me by inches. And I'm so useless—no use to anybody. You do everything for father; you and he understand each other—and somehow I get left out in the cold." There were tears in her eyes now, and she spoke most piteously. "I—I get nothing but the shadow. And that's why I long for any break—any change—any chance of a little fun."

"And I wish you had more fun," said Kathleen.

"I don't want to complain," and Mollie wiped her eyes. "I'm really apologizing for being a selfish little beast—and not like you, all goodness and self-sacrifice. . . . But now that a chance has come, I can't resist it;" and again recovering her cheerfulness, she began to laugh. "Now listen. I have ordered the wagonette—on my own responsibility; and directly after luncheon, you and I are going down to Bevistown to see all those dears get out of the train—to see them charge the mob—to see everything there is to see. . . . Don't say no. O'Kelly is going. And if you won't come with me, I shall just walk down arm-in-arm with him. I mean going, and nothing will stop me."

"Mollie, what a child you are!"

"Well, be a child too—just for one afternoon."

"I can't promise that; but, yes, we'll go—and we'll come home through Ewesland. I want to leave a note for Dr. Bryant—or to speak to him if I can."

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XIX

RICHARDS the coachman drove them over the bridge and into Bevistown very cautiously, even timorously, as if feeling that they were now entering the lions' den. He had not forgotten his experience of the crowd last Christmas. But to-day there was no obstruction; peace and quiet reigned in the almost empty streets, although to Mollie at least there seemed to be a delightful throb of excitement in the atmosphere.

"Hurry up," she called to Richards. "Take us to the station."

And the railway station was indeed worth visiting, though it proved impossible to obtain an adequately close view of it. As they approached, the emptiness of the streets explained itself. The whole town had come here to welcome the troops; crowds filled the station yard and all the roadway; there was cheering and hat-waving—really as much noise as if a war had been in progress, and the assembled townsfolk were acclaiming their saviours and defenders.

Over the heads of the people one could see trains of horse-boxes stretching far along the sidings, and here and there clusters of horses, troopers in khaki, baggage wagons; and all at once there came the clear strong notes of a trumpet. Then the crowd cheered again, and people began to move hurriedly. A detachment of the hussars had come out; the flat caps bobbed up and down as the horses gaily pranced; one heard some words of command; and then, escorted by the moving crowd, this first instalment turned into Market Street and disappeared.

"Drive right round now," cried Mollie, "and get

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back to the market-place. We shall see them there, Kath. The Keighley Arms is to be their head quarters—all the officers will be there."

It was impossible, however, to get anywhere near the old hotel. The crowd had filled the market-place before the carriage reached it, and Richards firmly declined to advance beyond the corner of King Street.

"What's the use, miss? If we get wedged in there again, how are we ever to get out?"

"The Hussars will get us out," said Mollie. "It'll be all different now. Oh, Kath, it is sickening to be so near, and yet not be able to see them properly."

More flat caps bobbing, another wagon, half a dozen troopers, leading their horses through the archway of stables behind the Town Hall, two or three inspiring trumpet calls—and really that was all poor Mollie could see or hear before she reluctantly consented to drive away.
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"Of course," she said, "he would have been too busy to talk to us, even if we had seen him. Still, I should like him to have known that we were there on his arrival."

The village of Ewesland was absolutely quiet—a few loafing men outside the tavern, but scarcely a soul visible in the steep street.

As the carriage stopped before Bryant's house Mr. Donaldson the nonconformist minister emerged from the grocer's shop and came across the road bowing and smiling.

"General Mallock's daughters—if I'm not mistaken! How fares it, young ladies? I hope your worthy parent is very well."

Mr. Donaldson informed them that Dr. Bryant was not at home, and while the footman was delivering Kathleen's note, he stood talking by the carriage door.

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"No, friend Bryant is on the hill. There is much sickness on the hill. . . . But, Miss Mallock, if your message is urgent, I can conduct you to him."

"Oh, no," said Kathleen, "it isn't at all urgent."

"My warm regards to your respected father," said Donaldson. "I have never forgotten his kindness and liberality; and those are two qualities that are rare indeed nowadays. . . . But one mustn't be lugubrious. Perhaps many of us are kinder than our acts seem to show. Good afternoon, Miss Mallock;" and he raised his hat and bowed. "I trust that you have enjoyed your drive on this bright day."

"We have been to see the soldiers," said Mollie childishly. "The soldiers have just arrived. They had such a splendid welcome."

Mr. Donaldson was beaming at the young ladies, and he had spoken with a paternal and yet deferential playfulness; but now his face became grave and solemn. He frowned and shook his head, and then addressed Miss Mollie very earnestly.

"I am sorry that you graced such a scene with your charming presence. . . . Think for a moment of what a cruel mistake all this is."

"How is it a mistake?" asked Kathleen.

"Look," said Donaldson, "the sun shining, the earth teeming with promise, all nature bright and gentle—but anger and fear in men's hearts!"

"Yes, I see what you mean. It is a great pity, but—"

"Ah, you can feel it," said Donaldson. "You are kind, and can sympathize with the oppressed and down-trodden."

"Yes, but—Mr. Donaldson—if you are speaking of the men, it is they who have been treading down and oppressing. You couldn't let them go on like this.

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And the soldiers are only here to keep them in order."

"The soldiers," said Donaldson forcibly, "are here to drive them like sheep—to harry and tear them if they resist. Can you be surprised if the men's hearts turn fierce and wrathful?"

"Oh, I hope they'll be sensible. . . . Where were they this afternoon—the strikers, I mean? We didn't see any of them at Bevistown."

"They were in their homes, Miss Mallock—some of them praying, I hope; some of them cursing, I fear; but all keeping quiet, to give proof that they do not wilfully seek a quarrel. . . . Ah, if you could read their thoughts, you'd understand that soldiers can do no good here."

"One must give them time," said Mollie. "When they're once settled down, they'll do wonders."

"No, no—believe me. It is a false move. It is a hideous mistake! And one day it may come to lay very heavy on the conscience of him who wilfully provokes the cruel mischief. Henceforth Lord Keighley is to blame for all that happens."

"What utter nonsense!" Kathleen had flushed, and she spoke indignantly. "Lord Keighley has done everything that was possible. He has been most considerate from the very beginning. He was just going to take back those men he dismissed. I think it will be a wicked shame if anyone blames Lord Keighley."

"Do you really think that?"

"Yes, I do—I do."

Mr. Donaldson had lifted a hand to his eyes, and he was looking at her intently. "Well, well," he said humbly. "It is not for us to apportion blame—but of this I am sure: Lord Keighley's best friends will

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serve him most truly when they urge him towards great moderation. . . . Good evening. Good evening."

"Well done," said Mollie, as the carriage drove on. "You sat on him finely." And then after a pause she added, "I was a little surprised; but, Kathleen, I was very glad to hear you speak up for our old friend."

The soldiers did not improve matters. Within the next few days their failure to restore order became painfully apparent. The strikers continued to demonstrate; some further destruction of machinery occurred at the Kirkwell quarry; and on the country roads, whenever a patrol of the hussars appeared, it was met with hootings and boosings.

O'Kelly was disappointed by this unsatisfactory news and expressed himself freely on the subject.

"'Tis not their fault, Miss Mollie. I make no doubt of that. They'd soon put things ship-shape, if they were left to do it their own way. But it's always the same story, with troops and rioters—hold 'em back, hide 'em away, and tie their hands wid instructions and hard and fast rules. . . . I hear they were never brought out the other evening till the row was all over."

"Yes, very stupid," said Mollie placidly.

"It fairly disgusts me," said O'Kelly. "Look now what a mighty hurly the town was in to get 'em here. They must come by railway—no time to march by road in proper style. And now they're here, these fools haven't the sense to use them. Ask the Lieutenant, miss, if he isn't sick of being messed about this way."

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and Mollie was perhaps the only person in the neighbourhood who was quite satisfied with the turn of events. Young Mr. Cartwright had not been slow to find his way out to Long Moor House. Nor was he slow to

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repeat his visit ; he came riding or bicycling up the moor road again and again, and Mollie naturally was pleased that he possessed so much leisure. . . . If his corps had been more busily and effectively employed she could not have been thus favoured.

He was truly a pleasant light-hearted visitor, with an honest sun-burnt young face, a ready laugh, and a manner in which there mingled gracefully enough the gallant openness of his calling and the bashful politeness of well-bred youth. Mollie could find no fault in him ; O'Kelly praised him effusively ; and General Mallock not only tolerated his presence, but on one occasion at least talked to him cordially and hospitably.

" Ah—er, Mr. Cartwright—very glad to see you."

" Thank you, sir," and the young man shyly fingered his fair moustache and showed his white teeth in a boyish smile.

" My daughters tell me that you are temporarily quartered at Bevistown," and the General smiled benignly. " I fear it must be very rough accommodation for you smart young fellows."

" Oh, we rub along all right, sir."

" But you feel it dull ?" General Mallock glanced at Kathleen, and then at Mollie. " You—ah—lack society. That is what we sometimes feel here. We are very quiet out here, Mr. Cartwright—excessively so, perhaps too much so."

" Do you stay here all the year, sir ?"

" Yes—oh, yes. It suits me—I am selfishly comfortable ;" and again General Mallock glanced at his daughters. " But what was I saying ? Oh, yes. We have no attractions to offer—so we think it very kind when people come to see us."

" Thank you, sir. I'm sure it's very kind of you to let me come."

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"Not at all. And bring your brother officers—if they care to accompany you."

If Mollie was delighted, Kathleen was astonished by hearing this liberal invitation. But soon she believed that she had interpreted her father's thought when issuing it: a double motive impelled him. Remembering Mollie's recent appeal, he bravely stifled his own disinclination for society; and moreover he desired to prove, perhaps to himself as well as to others, that there was no especial reason why he should shun the society of soldiers.

"Yes," he went on with a certain dignity and impressiveness, "pray give my compliments to your commanding officer. Who is your commanding officer?"

"Major Grinling, sir."

"Ah, yes. Then my compliments to Major Grinling, and tell him that I shall be very glad if he will visit me."

"Thank you, sir."

Kathleen was sure now that she had correctly guessed the thought of her father. Obviously it had cost him a considerable effort to say as much as he had just said, and he relapsed into a long silence.

Another time, when Mr. Cartwright had come to luncheon, the General asked a few questions about the guest's regiment and about modern discipline, drill, and so on.

"It is all changed since my time," he said. "Everything is new. I wonder if all the changes are for the better?"

"Oh, I think so, sir," said Mr. Cartwright. "Anyhow, we all hope so."

He spoke very politely; but something in his tone made Kathleen secretly indignant. And she noticed

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that the young man did not really answer the questions ; he contrived to turn the conversation ; he would not talk about his regiment—that is, he would not talk about it to General Mallock. He chattered freely enough when only she and Mollie were there.

Both to-day and on other days it seemed to her that there was something wanting in the manner of this young guest. He was respectful to her father, but it was the respect of healthy youth to age and debility—he stood until her father sat, he rather officiously moved chairs for him, he jumped up to fetch a newspaper for him ; but when one looked for the deference due from a subaltern to a general officer, there was nothing discernible. Young as he was, he knew the story ; he knew the judgment of the world ; and he had not sufficient chivalry—or even tact—to conceal the fact of his knowledge.

Perhaps all this was a fancy, bred of hypersensitivity : at any rate Mollie did not share her sister's opinion.

"Oh, Kath, how can you say he is tactless ? I think his manners are perfect. And he is *sweet* with father. He always says Sir—and I think it sounds so awfully nice."

"When he is talking to you, does he speak nicely of father ?"

"Oh yes, *always*."

XX

DR. BRYANT did not perhaps realize how great his hope had been until it was gone for ever. He felt absolutely miserable ; and the dull pain of defeat was not lightened by the knowledge that it was all caused by his own folly. He had been blind to facts, he had wilfully sought

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to attain the unattainable ; he had simply made a fool of himself.

He wished now that he could get away ; but the chance of escape had vanished. The southern doctor had written mildly reproaching him for his refusal ; but adding that his decision was no doubt made from good and valid causes, and still further adding that somebody else had gladly come forward to accept the offer rejected by Bryant. A useless sacrifice, a lost chance—but no good crying over spilt milk.

Bryant went about his work dully but resolutely. In the work he could forget himself ; no doctors can be self-conscious while absolutely working ; and he struggled staunchly and bravely against the absorbing and destructive influences of egoistic repinings.

But above all else he wished at first that he could have avoided seeing Kathleen Mallock. He wished that he need never again go to Long Moor House ; but duty took him there. Kathleen wrote him notes, as of old, asked for his advice, leaned on him for support ; their friendly confidential relations could not be broken. She knew nothing, must never know anything of his distress.

On arriving at the house he felt stupid and confused ; painful embarrassment lasted while he remained talking with Kathleen ; but directly he was in the presence of her father, professional instincts rose to his assistance, self was at once obliterated, he became a doctor and nothing else. Consideration of the case and deepening sympathy with the patient completely shut out the slightest memory of his own concerns. And during these last few weeks the purely professional feelings grew stronger at every visit.

What was the matter with General Mallock ?

A subtle but rapid change was occurring. Every

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time that Bryant saw him the change was more perceptible ; and yet, though rapid, it was gradual, without salient features or marked transitions : only by careful record of past impressions and comparison with existing conditions could one measure the extent of the change. And for this reason it was almost unnoticed by those who lived day after day with the patient ; although Bryant, summoning the picture of General Mallock as seen for the first time a year ago, traced the most startling differences.

It was always at the initial glance, when coming into the room, that the doctor felt struck by the outward alteration ; then his consciousness of the change lessened, and he used to go away puzzled and wondering.

"Good morning, General. Here's another nice warm day."

The General, sitting huddled in his big chair by the bureau, with white hair, waxen complexion, tremulous hands, looked an old, old man. Laboriously rising, advancing slowly with feeble footsteps, he looked a very sick man.

"Dr. Bryant," said Kathleen, "was driving to Redchurch, so he kindly came this way."

"Yes ? That is very kind of him."

The doctor, while these few words were spoken, was studying his patient and thinking of the past.

The patient used to stoop ; but he had a characteristic trick of pulling himself together and standing erect. Now the stoop had greatly increased, and he did not resist it. His manner used to be quiet, and he hesitated curiously. Now he had an air of forced repression ; the vagueness in his gestures was strikingly obvious ; every movement was performed slackly, slowly, and rather shakily. His eyes that had seemed defective in glow or fire were now dim and tarnished ;

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he peered at one from behind steel-rimmed spectacles, blinked when the light fell upon his pupils, and seemed to turn for relief towards the darker part of the room.

Bryant asked him a lot of questions about the eyes—tested them once or twice. The doctor was perhaps worried as well as puzzled by these unexplained symptoms of defective eyesight.

"You find you don't get on comfortably without your glasses?"

"No," said General Mallock, "not quite comfortably without my glasses."

Yet Dr. Bryant could discover nothing wrong with the eyes.

Here was the puzzle of the case. There was nothing organically wrong; physically the patient was well-preserved for his years; there was no apparent reason why senility and weakness should with this suddenness descend upon him.

But then after a few minutes had passed, General Mallock seemed more like his old self. He had slowly roused himself to the effort of conversation; a more healthy colour returned to his face; his grey clothes seemed to hang less loosely on his limbs; he looked at one with more intentness.

He came out into the hall when Bryant was going, picked up a hat, and stood in the bright sunshine outside the porch. And then it almost seemed that the change was an imagination and not a fact. General Mallock, smiling and nodding with his daughter by his side, seemed now much the same as he had always been. The aspect of extreme age had disappeared; that air of frailness and feebleness had gone too; he was dressed as carefully and neatly as ever—grey suit, tie with intaglio ring, blue shirt, and nothing slovenly;—a dignified, courtly old gentleman, but

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with something about him—as there had always been—that was infinitely pathetic: a wistful sadness that issuing from him touched chords of sympathy in one's heart.

But then when Bryant saw him again, he saw the change again—a progress, an insidious advance, an unchecked deterioration. For a year he had been losing ground, and he was losing ground still—what was it? A loss of interest in life, a mental lethargy? It was mental, not bodily; all inward; causes that lay deep and hidden. And Bryant thought—as he had thought very often in the last year—of a passage that he had marked with a pencil in one of his text books.

He asked Kathleen searching questions about her father's silence in regard to the past. Had he maintained it? Did he never allude to the old grievance?

"No," she said, "since that day when he promised you he would try to forget, he has never made the slightest allusion to it."

"And do you think he has really put all that behind him—that he has been able to dismiss it from his mind?"

But this Kathleen could not say. She feared that he still thought of it.

"There has been nothing lately to remind him of it, has there?"

"No, nothing."

"For instance, in the books he has read. What sort of books has he read of late?"

"He reads very little except the newspapers."

"Well, I don't think there has been anything in newspapers that would be likely to set him brooding on his old experiences. That is what one would wish to guard against. The great thing is to prevent his being reminded."

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"Yes. But, Doctor Bryant, something is coming soon that must remind him—that can't possibly be prevented."

"What's that?"

"The anniversary of Andalkund."

"Oh!" Bryant looked grave. "Of course. Let me see—when is that?"

"The twentieth of March."

"Not quite three weeks ahead. . . . Well, as you say, that can't be prevented. And it will—naturally—tend to arouse the old thoughts again. Yes, I remember last year."

At this visit Bryant stayed a long time. To-day it was very difficult to make General Mallock talk; but Bryant seemed pertinaciously determined to force him to do so. The doctor was testing the correctness of certain surmises.

"Do you take *The Times*, General?"

"Yes, we take *The Times*."

"It's a wonderful paper, isn't it? It keeps up its high standard."

"Yes, it keeps up its high standard."

Bryant noticed something symptomatic in these replies. General Mallock preferred to echo the words of each question, rather than face the labour of framing a new sentence for his answer. That is what men always do when they are tired and bored, or when they are engaged with their own thoughts and are merely giving an automatic surface attention to the speaker.

"What is your opinion of local affairs?" asked Bryant.

This was a question that could scarcely be answered with an echo, and yet an echo was all that General Mallock could supply.

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"Local affairs!"

"Yes. Have you heard how things are going on?"

"I? Ah—no, Bryant, no."

"Have you seen Lord Keighley just lately?"

"Lord Keighley? No—I think not very lately."

"General," said Bryant abruptly, "will you come out into the garden?"

"Into the garden? Ah—yes."

This also was a test. Bryant had formulated the request in a tone of voice that sounded almost aggressive; but General Mallock showed not the faintest sign of surprise. Submissively he accepted the suggestion, rose from his chair, and moved slowly to the door.

Men completely immersed in their secret thoughts are prone to be thus submissive. What they dread is that you will drag them out of their reverie; and until you do that, the submission is sometimes limitless.

"Of course I'll come and see you to-morrow," said Bryant, following the General to the hall.

"To-morrow! Thank you, Bryant. Yes, thank you."

And the doctor remembered the patient's querulous objection to being treated fussily. Often he had indicated very plainly that he was annoyed by Bryant's visits. Now he thanked him for the promise of another visit.

"Let us walk up and down out there, and have a good talk."

They strolled to and fro on the drive between the house and the gate; and once more Bryant observed the gradual return of animation, the reappearance of a fairly normal manner. It was like watching a sleeper awake, like watching a diver rise to the surface. After half an hour General Mallock was himself again. His

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footsteps were sufficiently firm, he carried himself better, the far-away tone no longer sounded in his voice.

But what was there in those vague depths from which he had slowly emerged? What lay behind the blank apathy of half an hour ago? Was the dominant idea always there? Was the toxic agency of dark thoughts always busy—even now? Before Bryant went away he had arrived at some definite conclusions.

"Your eyes don't trouble you out here?"

"No—not in the least."

"I thought they wouldn't. . . . General, you're altogether too much mewed up in doors. What you want is air and exercise."

"My dear fellow!" The blood colour showed well now. He had pulled himself up, and he spoke fretfully, if not angrily—exactly as he used to speak a year ago. "What I want is freedom from worry and interruption."

"I am sorry if I have interrupted you."

"No, no—I didn't mean that. You—you are extremely kind. But the fact is, as I asked my daughter to tell you—well, there is no occasion for you to treat me as a confirmed invalid. I am obliged—yes, greatly obliged to you for looking at my eyes. But—yes, otherwise, I must confess that all this care is rather irksome."

"You were writing when I disturbed you?"

"Yes, I amuse myself by my scribbling."

Just then Kathleen came out and joined them; and General Mallock, as though conscience-stricken for having spoken irritably, lingered for a little while.

They talked of the strike and the recent damage at the quarries, and Bryant's attention was temporarily drawn away from his patient.

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Kathleen, speaking of Keighley, betrayed a great anxiety to learn what people were saying and thinking about him.

"Somebody declared to us that it was he who should be blamed for all the trouble. You don't think that, do you?"

And Bryant felt a purely selfish discomfort as he noticed her eagerness.

"No," he said doubtfully. "But I don't think he is very wise."

"But how can anyone blame him? What more could he have done? I know he tries to act for the best."

"There's danger in that."

Bryant looked round quickly. It was General Mallock who had spoken; and once again his voice had the distant flat tone of a person following out his own thought and not really listening to a conversation.

"There's danger," he repeated. "If he fails, his good intentions won't save him from blame. That's a discovery men often make too late."

There could be no mistaking this. Though he spoke of Lord Keighley, he was thinking of himself.

"Good-bye, Bryant." His eyes were dim again; he blinked at the sunlight; the gesture with which he offered his hand was vacillating and uncertain. "I —yes, if you'll excuse me, I'll go back to my room."

Bryant watched him as he moved slowly to the house.

Then, turning to Kathleen, he gave her some explicit advice.

"Miss Mallock, your father *must* be roused out of these lethargic stay-at-home habits."

"But it seems impossible. What can we do?"

"Well, you mustn't help him so much. I know

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you manage things for him—you try to take every burden off his shoulders, to spare him all trouble. Don't do so any more. Don't spare him. If he has bothering letters, let him answer them himself. . . . Let him attend to household matters. It really is of paramount importance that he should lead a more active life."

"Paramount importance! Oh, Dr. Bryant, does that mean you think him seriously ill?"

"No, there is practically nothing the matter with him; and yet his state is one that might, if it did not improve, occasion serious uneasiness."

Then, seeing the alarm that these big words had caused, he spoke cheerfully.

"I know it is very difficult, but I would suggest: try if possible to get more people to see him. Never mind if he says he is bored. He doesn't take sufficient interest in things. Endeavour by every means to arouse his interest. . . . And when you are alone with him, make him talk. Get your sister to help you;" and Bryant smiled. "I feel sure that Miss Mollie will agree with me that too much silence is bad for people."

All that evening Bryant thought of the case of General Mallock—the most difficult case that he had met with in all his experience.

A man with a grievance; then a man with a dominant idea; and then—then the third phase!

Bryant was thinking of that passage in the clever treatise on mental diseases. Absolutely true. Without the smallest doubt General Mallock was persistently brooding on the old theme. Without perceptible transition he had passed from the first phase into the second—the fatal progress was unchecked. He was now a man with a dominant idea, warping everything seen or heard to fit the central thought of his mind,

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never free for a minute from the unresting process of morbid cerebration. Could he possibly be saved from entering the third phase?

To-night Bryant thought only of the case. The professional feeling had grown so strong that even in his solitude no selfish recollection disturbed him. He did not once remember the twinge of jealous pain he had felt when Kathleen Mallock showed such an eager desire that Lord Keighley should be exonerated from blame.

XXI

"FATHER," said Kathleen, "O'Kelly has been into Bevistown and changed your cheque. Here's the money."

General Mallock laid down his pen, slowly turned in his chair, and looked round.

"What money?"

"For the servants—and the house. Silver—five pounds. The rest gold. Will you count it, and see if it is all right?"

She had entered the room gaily, and bustling; and now she put the little bag of money on the bureau amidst the scrawled and erased manuscript notes.

"To-morrow is Saturday—pay-day. Had you forgotten that, father?"

"No, dear—I don't think so;" and he adjusted the spectacles on his thin nose, and looked at her questioningly. "But to-morrow won't you—won't *you* be able?"

"I want you to do it to-morrow—if you don't mind."

"Er, well, then—But, Kathleen, *why?*"

Kathleen answered nervously and hurriedly.

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"I might be getting things in a muddle if I went on doing it all by myself. . . . I want you to go through my account book—and see for yourself if it is correct."

This was a first dose of the medicine prescribed by Bryant. Kathleen, while administering it, felt contrition, affectionate concern, extreme reluctance. She kissed her father's forehead very tenderly and lovingly; then hurried out of the room.

In the old days General Mallock and O'Kelly had together run the house on almost military lines; and there was a precision and formality about their proceedings on Saturday mornings that seemed worthy of the best conducted barracks. At a fixed hour O'Kelly mustered all the men-servants, inspected them as if for a parade, and then solemnly marched them to the General's room. Then the General, sitting at his bureau, with O'Kelly standing at attention by his side, paid out the week's wages, asked a few questions of each recipient, issued orders, and spoke words of praise or censure. The men, taking their money, filed out one by one; and at last O'Kelly and the commander of the barracks were left alone.

If anyone was desirous of lodging a complaint, or of obtaining further instructions for his special department, he was brought back again; and with orderly-room promptitude the matter was cleared up.

"Now, Richards, you can speak freely. O'Kelly tells me you are not satisfied with the last supply of oats from Jenkinson. Is that so?"

"Yes, sir. It's like this—"

And the coachman, or whichever of them it was, told his story.

When the men were done with, it was the turn of the women.

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Kathleen appeared with the cook's book—sometimes with the cook herself; was given funds for minor household expenses; drew monthly wages for the maids.

All accountancy was performed by the General; the smallest tradesmen's bills were checked by him; and he seemed to derive pleasure rather than annoyance from this trifling labour. He was accurate, methodic, obviously a little proud of the neatness of his endorsed papers, receipted invoices, and personal memoranda.

"There," he would say finally. "That works out exact—to a farthing."

"To a farthing," said O'Kelly.

"Then that will do, O'Kelly."

"Yes, sir."

And the General put away the cash book, locked the money drawer, got up, and stretched himself.

But all this was in the old days. The Saturday parade had been allowed to lapse; it had become a weariness and a burden to him; for a long time Kathleen had relieved him of the weekly trouble. Now she suddenly thrust it on him again.

She hovered about the hall next morning after the men had been marshalled—Frederick the footman; Gates, a sort of odd man; Richards the coachman, with his three grooms and helpers; the two gardeners; and the labourer or farm-hand who looked after the cows and pigs; nine of them, or with O'Kelly ten altogether—these formed the entire regiment, now disbanded, that the General had drilled and exercised on his toy range, and that he used to handle so promptly and easily even in his private quarters.

Plainly they were too many for him this morning. Kathleen, presently glancing in through the open door, saw him as he stooped over the desk, fumbled with the

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money, and feebly turned as if appealing for the aid that had been so unexpectedly withdrawn.

Kathleen went back to the hall again, and waited there—it was difficult to resist the eloquence of his silent appeal.

He was fearfully slow in counting the coins. It seemed an immense time before the servants began to come out of the room.

The coachman saw his underlings across the hall and through the red baize door to the servants' offices, and then, returning, asked Kathleen if he might have a word with her.

"It's about Curtis, miss—if you could spare a minute."

Curtis was one of the grooms, and Richards reported that his conduct was so reprehensible that he ought to be dismissed. Curtis had become lazy and impudent; he had little work to do, but he did it badly; he presumed on the kindness of his employer, and defied the authority of Richards.

"Of course they all know the General don't like parting with 'em—this young chap behaves as if he was safe here, work or not, for the rest of his days. I've put up with a lot from him, miss—cheeking me behind my back and before my face; and I'm certain sure it isn't right to keep him any longer. He'll only upset the other two, who are good chaps, both of 'em. . . . Besides," concluded Richards, "what is the stable work now? We don't require three out there nowadays. It was another thing when the General and you were riding regular."

"Very well, Richards, then I suppose Curtis must go."

Richards was a trusted servant: as head of the stables he had proved himself deserving of confidence.

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"Then, miss, can you tell the General—any time convenient like—and get his leave? Of course I don't like to speak to the General myself."

"Why not?"

"Well, miss, any little thing does seem to worry him so."

"Oh, no," said Kathleen. "You had better speak to him at once. Tell him all about it—and he will decide."

She was in the morning-room, ready to present the cook's and her own account book, while Richards had his interview with the master of the house. It was quite in the old style—closed doors for confidential reports. Only it was a much slower affair now. At last the door opened, and she heard the end of the interview.

"Quite sure I'm right, sir," Richards was saying. "Mr. O'Kelly will tell you just the same."

"Yes, sir," said O'Kelly. "Too big for his boots! Oi've had me eye on um, meself."

"Ah, then, yes," said General Mallock slowly. "There would seem to be no help for it. Insubordination, no. That's dangerous. Yes—I agree with you, Richards. Send him about his business—but without hurry or harshness. Proper notice—full notice."

"Very good, sir."

That finished General Mallock's labours with the men.

When the room was clear and Kathleen came in, he was leaning back in his chair with half closed eyes.

"May I have the money for the cook, father?"

"Yes, dear." He roused himself, and looked at her wearily. "Take it—please count it yourself."

"And here is my book."

"Put it down, my dear. I'll examine it later. Come

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for it after luncheon. It is luncheon time now, isn't it?"

"Yes, father."

"Ah—the whole morning gone. I don't want any luncheon. . . . My scribbling has been stopped. All this has interrupted me; but, however," and he sighed, "it's of no consequence."

In the afternoon when Kathleen went to fetch the account book, he was huddled in his chair and sleeping deeply, as if thoroughly exhausted. She stood by him, looking down at his pale tired face, and felt dreadfully contrite.

It seemed a cruel medicine.

XXII

A FORTNIGHT had passed, and now towards the middle of March the weather was as warm as one could have expected in May.

The front door at Long Moor House stood wide, and through it and the open windows the bright morning sunshine poured into the hall, giving rainbow tints to the hearth-rug and chair covers, and making the polished floor and the carved legs of the oak table glow as if they were on fire.

General Mallock was sitting at the table with several newspapers spread out before him, and he did not stir when Kathleen came through the porch and spoke to him.

"Father, see! . . . I picked these in the sunk lane. . . . The first primroses. A message of spring!"

She was wearing a big straw hat, and she looked as pretty as a picture personifying Spring—framed by the sunlit doorway, with the yellow flowers in her hand, and her blue eyes shining out of pearl-grey

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shadow. But then, as she came forward and watched her father anxiously, all the gaiety and brightness of her appearance faded.

"It is lovely out. . . . Father, won't you come for a stroll?"

"No." General Mallock had not raised his eyes from the newspaper. "No—I think not."

"Anything interesting in the paper?"

"No."

Then after a pause he spoke again, as if to himself.

"But it seems that the concentrated eyes of the world are staring at us in our remoteness and insignificance."

"Father, what do you mean?"

"I mean the quarries. I mean Bevistown. Four months ago no one had ever heard of it. Now the great searchlight of publicity is upon it." He was slowly folding the newspaper, and for the first time he looked up. "Kathleen, what a wonderful thing it is! I've often thought of it. A place may exist for hundreds of years without a history, and then in a day it makes its indelible mark in men's minds. This has happened again and again. Millions of strangers turn their eyes to one small spot on a map. Some accident gives reality to what has been a speck of ink and a printed name; and henceforth the unseen place has its good or evil history."

"Oh," said Kathleen, with affected carelessness, "I don't think historians will bother about Bevistown and its little excitements."

"No, very likely not." He had got up, and he stood motionless by the table, as if lost in thought. Then after a long pause he roused himself and walked very slowly towards the morning-room. "Kathleen!"

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"Yes."

"Keighley is coming to lunch with us."

"Lord Keighley!" She seemed at once surprised, troubled, and pleased. "Oh, I'm so glad you asked him."

"I didn't. . . . He has written, offering his uninvited company."

"Will it bore you?"

"Yes."

"But, father, we see so few visitors—and it does one good to see—"

"Yes, I know," said General Mallock, very wearily. "Yes, we must have visitors—for you and Mollie. But for myself, no," and he shook his head. "Oh, no. I wish that people would leave me alone. . . . Keighley says he is coming early—to talk to me about some business matter. I'll be in my room."

Kathleen stood looking after her father as he passed slowly out of sight. What could possibly be bringing Lord Keighley back again as a visitor? What could he have to talk about?

Half an hour later she was still in the hall and still wondering, when Mollie appeared at the top of the stairs and called to her with volatile excitement.

Mollie carried a piece of needlework in her hand. She was dressed in a summerlike frock; her voice, her face, her gestures were full of life and gaiety; and, hurrying down the stairs, she looked like another pretty picture—a typical presentment of innocent youth and hope.

"I am Sister Ann, and from my window I've seen someone approaching the castle."

"Lord Keighley?"

"No. It's Mr. Cartwright!"

"What, again?"

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"Pushing his bicycle up the road—not riding it, just pushing it."

"Yes, he's a very pushing young man."

"Oh, Kathleen, don't you really like him?"
Kathleen smiled. "Do I really like him? Do you? That's the question you'll soon have to decide."

"He hasn't *spoken* yet," and Mollie went across to one of the windows. "He may have no *intentions*."

"I fancy his intentions are fairly obvious."

"Kath," said Mollie demurely. "As you are more or less my chaperon, don't you think you ought to sound Mr. Cartwright—of course without committing me to anything?"

"Don't be ridiculous."

"Ought I to stop him speaking?"

"How could you stop him?"

"Well—by coldness."

"Don't you want him to speak?"

"I'm not quite sure." Then Mollie turned excitedly from the window. "Here he comes!"

"How do you do?" Young Mr. Cartwright, standing with his bicycle at the open door and looking into the hall, laughed shyly. "I say—I'm punctured. May I get one of your handy men at the stables to put it right?"

"Oh, please do," said Kathleen politely, but not cordially.

"It won't take ten minutes—and may I stay till it's mended?"

"Of course."

"Thanks awfully," and Mr. Cartwright with his bicycle disappeared.

"I believe," said Mollie excitedly, "that he stabbed the tyre with his penknife, just to make an excuse. Isn't that lamblike?"

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"No, idiotic."

"Kathleen," and Mollie spoke with childish perturbation, "I've a dreadful fear that he means to speak to-day—and I want to do what's exactly right. I ought to express great surprise?"

"Yes, that is, I believe, traditionally correct."

"Surprise—but not indignation. No, that would be absurd. Just surprise;" and Mollie went on shyly and eagerly. "You'll give him an opportunity—you won't stick with us till he goes? And, Kathleen, give him time to speak. Ask him to lunch."

"No," said Kathleen seriously, "we mustn't do that to-day."

"Father can't mind Mr. Cartwright. He's so inoffensive."

"But he's tactless."

"Oh, do ask him—for this once."

Then Mr. Cartwright reappeared, without his bicycle, and Kathleen could only shake her head to convey a warning negative.

"Well," she said, "how are things at Beviston?"

"Oh, humming!" And Mr. Cartwright chuckled in a juveniley facetious way. "The great McGaher spouts every night in the Market Place, and the Mayor has read the Riot Act so often that he ought to know it by heart."

"Doesn't anybody listen to him?"

"Not a cat;" and Mr. Cartwright's chuckle became a laugh.

Kathleen looked at him and at her sister. They both seemed very young, very shy, very light-hearted.

"Mollie," she said, with an air of having just remembered something. "You must entertain Mr. Cartwright until his bicycle is ready. I'm obliged to—"

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"Yes," said Mr. Cartwright, "please don't let me——"

Kathleen withdrew to the morning-room, and Mollie was left alone with her admirer. It would have proved more comfortable perhaps if she could have been given the use of the morning-room instead of the hall. A hall with a stair-case and upper gallery, an open porch, and three unguarded doors, is not the most convenient scene for a quiet conversation that may at any moment rise to vast emotional heights.

Mollie, glancing at the red baize door of the offices and the mahogany door of the dining-room, drew a chair towards the furthest window, out of the way of the front door; demurely seated herself, and began stitching at her needlework.

"I should have thought," she said, "that the authority of your regiment would overawe them."

"Over-what them?" Mr. Cartwright chuckled and fingered his fair moustache. "We simply make 'em worse. Don't know what we're here for. We ride about, with strict orders not to interfere, and they shy stones at us from behind hedges."

Mollie raised her eyes from the stitching with an expression of sympathetic horror.

"Oh, not stones!"

"Whopping big stones. And *mud!*" Mr. Cartwright laughed and showed his white teeth. "We shall be known to posterity as the Royal Aunt Sallies."

"Oh, no!"

"We ought to have brought the band. Music has charms to soothe the savage breast."

"Ah," said Mollie sentimentally, "I remember your band."

"And yet," said Mr. Cartwright, chuckling again,

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"in spite of everything we have got a few recruits. Isn't that funny?"

"It's the pretty uniform."

"But the pretty uniform won't be fit to wear if this goes on. We shall be in rags. . . . I say!"

"Yes?"

He too had taken a chair, and he sat upon it astride—in what Mollie thought was a very charming cavalry attitude. Now he advanced the chair,—as if spurring forward a timid charger—and gazed at Mollie and her needlework with sentimental admiration.

"I say—Miss Mollie! How awfully industrious you are. My mother does work like that. Embroidery, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Awfully clever embroidery—yours is. . . ."

Then the servants' door opened, and O'Kelly came into the hall.

"Sir," said O'Kelly, "there's nothing the matter with the bicycle."

"Oh, thank you;" and Mr. Cartwright got off his chair. "Thanks. Much obliged."

Mollie stared at O'Kelly freezingly; but he did not immediately go out again. He marched across to the fireplace.

"The foire! What's become of the foire?"

"Never mind," said Mollie.

"Upon me word," said O'Kelly, replenishing the grate with coals, "it's the sun! Ye'll hear scientific gentlemen pretend the sun can't put out the foire. But would ye look now at that? The sunlight has eaten the very core of it;" and he rested the poker upright against the bars.

"Never mind," Mollie repeated. "We don't want a fire."

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"Only for appearance' sake," said O'Kelly. "'Tis cheerful;" and instead of retiring to the servants' quarters, he marched out through the porch.

"You know," said Mollie, offering her usual apology, "O'Kelly served with father in India. That's why he is with us now."

"Yes, he's simply top-hole. . . . Hullo! What's that?"

O'Kelly, with a tremendous clatter, was letting down a big sun blind outside one of the windows; and as he did so, it seemed that he had plunged half the hall in darkness. For a few moments one's eyes could not accustom themselves to the change. The sunlight still streaming in on one side made a sharp dividing line where the heavy shadow fell across the floor.

Mr. Cartwright laughed. "A little oil wanted out there! The machine gone rusty—sounded like a tin avalanche."

"Yes, didn't it?" and Mollie smiled at him. "But you were just going to say something."

"Was I? Oh, yes. I say—I was wondering if you and your sister could come over to tea some afternoon."

"Oh, I should love to."

"We've no proper mess. We're at the Keighley Arms."

"Yes, I know."

"It's a dreadfully dingy place, but if you can excuse——"

"Oh, it *would* be nice."

"It would be for *me*;" and Mr. Cartwright suddenly abandoned himself to fatuous sentimentality. "Everything's nice where you are. The Keighley Arms will change into the Ritz Hotel. It will be as if you had a fairy wand, and waved——"

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But O'Kelly had come in again.

"There!" He was pointing triumphantly at the fire as he marched to the hearth. "There! That's my answer to science." Then, having replaced the poker, he addressed Cartwright genially. "Are you coming near to quiet those noisy beggars, sir?"

"No, we're not, Sergeant."

"How on earth is it, sir?"

"Oh, you'd better ask McGaher."

"What, that fellow!" And O'Kelly's hitherto jovial voice expressed a lofty scorn. "He's beneath the notice of you gentlemen. A dhrity Irishman!"

"Aren't you Irish yourself?"

"Yes, sir, but there's Irish an' Irish—the clane sort and the dhrity sort. McGaher's a disgrace to the country of his birth—and no credit to the country of his adoption." O'Kelly, with quite a majestic air, moved to the baize door. But there he paused, turned, and stood looking at the young people reflectively and affectionately. "I'm well acquainted with your regiment, sir. Vittoria, Lucknow, Candahar, Telekkebir! That's right, Miss. The list of battles, sir?"

"Yes," said Cartwright, "what about 'em?"

"They used to be on the colour."

"Oh, yes, they're there still, and we've added some more."

"Have you, sir? Yes, I used to be well acquainted with the habits of the Twelfth."

"You must come over and renew your acquaintance."

"Thank you, sir;" and O'Kelly looked gratified. "If I can be spared one day."

"You shall be," said Mollie coldly and pointedly.

. . . "Oh, is that you, Kathleen?"

The morning-room door had opened. Drawn by the sound of mingled voices, Kathleen reappeared.

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Mollie glanced at her sister and the butler appealingly and despairingly.

"If you please!" O'Kelly, on the point of going, came back to speak to Kathleen. "The General let fall that there'd be company for luncheon, but he hasn't warned us how many we should lay for."

Kathleen answered hurriedly. "We are only expecting Lord Keighley on business."

"All right," said O'Kelly. "Two extra! . . . I'm counting the Lieutenant, of course."

There was no help for it. Kathleen felt compelled to confirm O'Kelly's implied invitation.

"Will you be able to stay to lunch, Mr. Cartwright?"

"Rather! . . . But, I say—shan't I be in the way?"

"Oh, no—of course not."

"Then thank you very much."

"Two extra then," said O'Kelly; and he retired at last through the baize door. Mollie was looking at her sister gratefully, but still pleadingly. Kathleen went upstairs.

Then once more Mollie settled herself to her stitching, and Mr. Cartwright resumed his straddled seat.

"Miss Mollie!"

"Yes?"

"I do like Sergeant O'Kelly."

"Do you?"

"He always seems so glad to see one."

"Of course we all know he's absurd—as a butler. . . . But what were you saying just now when he interrupted you?"

Mr. Cartwright answered rather absently.

"Was O'Kelly ever married?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering," said Mr. Cartwright, with the

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same absent tone. "Wondering if he took his wife with him to India." Then he laughed, and went on gaily: "You know, soldiers have to wait until they can get their wives on the strength, or else leave 'em at home. So it isn't always easy for them to marry, however much they may wish to marry."

Mollie had shyly risen, and she let her embroidery fall to the floor.

"Mr. Cartwright, you surprise me. You take my breath away."

"Eh, what? Oh, I say—did you think? Do you mean?" Mr. Cartwright looked perplexed, blushed, jumped to his feet. "Miss Mollie?" Then he took his plunge with eager delight. "Mollie! Will you wait until I get my troop, and then come upon the strength?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's all so sudden. . . ."

Voices and quick footsteps sounded outside; two figures passed the sunlit window. Then the front door bell rang loudly.

"Bother!" said Mollie emphatically, as she turned her head and saw Dr. Bryant and the Reverend Mr. Donaldson standing in the porch.

"Good morning," said the doctor. "Can your father see Mr. Donaldson for a minute?"

"Say three minutes," corrected the minister.

"Oh, come in, please," said Mollie.

That, of course, was the end of the delightfully exciting dialogue. The hall was given over to intruders, and one had to support a stupid irrelevant conversation while O'Kelly went to fetch Kathleen and Kathleen in her turn went to fetch the General.

Mr. Donaldson would not sit down. He waved his shovel hat with a deprecating gesture and beamed at everybody.

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"I trespass on your courtesy. But your father will pardon me."

"Yes. They are telling him you have come."

"I have come," said Donaldson, "with a prayer in a good cause;" and he beamed at Mollie. "The best of all causes—charity! And the best kind of charity—the charity that begins at home." And he bowed to Mr. Cartwright. "You know, I have a profound admiration for General Mallock."

"Er—yes," said Mr. Cartwright, looking shy and foolish.

"I am addressing his son? You are young Mr. Mallock?"

"No—er, no."

Then Mollie made formal introductions. "Mr. Donaldson—Mr. Cartwright.... Dr. Bryant."

"Pardon my mistake," said Donaldson, vigorously shaking hands. "That shows how rash it is to jump to conclusions."

"Don't mention it," said Cartwright.

It was a relief when the self-possessed Kathleen returned, and informed Mr. Donaldson that her father would be with him directly.

"My time is his time. I am not like friend Bryant, with a carriage waiting for me—and many calls to pay."

"Won't you sit down?"

"Well, thank you—since you too give me leave, I'll rest my legs;" and he laughed good-humouredly. "They are the only conveyance that I own myself."

"Mr. Donaldson," said Bryant, making conversation, "was telling me all the latest news as we drove up. As everybody admits, he has great influence with the men."

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"Then, Mr. Donaldson," said Kathleen cordially, "can't you exert your influence, and lead them to—"

"Nay!" Mr. Donaldson, interrupting, spoke with beaming mildness and used his hat for another gesture of deprecation. "How can a shepherd lead while his flock are being harried by wolves?"

"Wolves!" ejaculated Cartwright. "I say!"

"And it is all such a monstrous mistake. An understanding would be so easy even now, with a little dipplummicity." Mr. Donaldson waved the hat jauntily, looked round at his audience, and spoke lightly and gaily. "Mrs. Donaldson says if I'd been a man of high fam'ly and lib'ral education, I'd have done well as a dipplummitist. I don't know," and his voice grew serious and earnest. "I received my call. . . . But I tell her it isn't wasted;" and he continued as gaily as before. "I use my faculties. I try to seize the golden opportunity. The syklogicle moment. . . . Ah! My dear sii;" and Mr. Donaldson rose and bowed.

General Mallock, advancing hesitatingly, looked about him with a somewhat confused air, as if surprised by seeing so many people.

"Mr. Donaldson, good-day to you. . . . Oh, Bryant, good-day. . . . Mr. Donaldson, shall we go into my room?"

As Donaldson, bowing and smiling, moved towards the morning-room door, young Mr. Cartwright came shyly forward.

"How do you do, sir?"

General Mallock looked at him in obvious perplexity.

"Mr. Cartwright, father," prompted Kathleen.

"Mr. Cartwright was bicycling—"

"Ah, my dear fellow. These glasses—ah—play me

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tricks. For the moment I did not recognize you. To be sure. Mr. Cartwright of the Twelfth Hussars!" With a most perceptible effort General Mallock assumed a tone of pleasure. "Yes, yes, yes. Very glad to see you. We are dull out here. Bring your brother officers. Yes, my compliments to—ah—Major Grinling; and I hope he will visit me."

"Thank you, sir."

Donaldson near the doorway of the morning-room clutched Bryant by his coat lapel, and spoke in a loudly solemn whisper.

"Is that young man one of the cavalry riders?"

"Yes," whispered Bryant.

"I would not have touched his hand if I had known."

"Hush."

"Yes, yes," General Mallock was repeating. "Very glad." Then, as if feeling confused again, he put his hand to his forehead. "But I said all this once before. I sent a friendly message;" and he looked searchingly at Cartwright. "Did you give my friendly message to Major Grinling?"

The question seemed to embarrass Mr. Cartwright.

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Ah! I see. . . . Your commanding officer does not wish to visit me."

"Oh no, sir." Mr. Cartwright stammered and hesitated. "That is, except that perhaps he thinks——"

"What does he think?"

"Well, sir, he had a cousin in the Forty-third."

"When?"

"He—he—" Then Mr. Cartwright blurted out his answer. "He was killed in the retreat from Andalkund. So Grinling thought—that is, I believe he

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thought—that if you knew it, you wouldn't really care for meeting him."

General Mallock had drawn back as if under the weight of a blow. For a moment he stood with bowed head, staring at the floor; then he pulled himself together, and spoke in a firm but rather husky voice.

"Give my compliments to Major Grinling, and tell him I'd not be ashamed to see the ghosts of all the men who served under my command. The dead are kinder than the living."

"I beg your pardon, sir, for mentioning it. Of course we all know—"

General Mallock turned and moved slowly towards the morning-room. "I am quite at your disposal, Mr. Donaldson." Then he turned again, came back, and put his hand on Cartwright's shoulder. "All right, my dear fellow. No consequence. You are frank and open. Your words are barbs, but without poison."

"Thank you, sir, I assure you, I had no intention—" And Mr. Cartwright, covered with confusion, retired into the corner by the darkened window, as if to hide himself.

"Take him away," said Kathleen to her sister in an indignant whisper. "I told you he had no tact."

"Mr. Cartwright," said Mollie, "will you come into the garden?"

"Yes—love to. Rather. Thanks awfully."

General Mallock had followed Mr. Donaldson and closed the morning-room door. Dr. Bryant and Kathleen, left alone, looked at each other blankly.

"That was unfortunate," said Bryant, "really most unfortunate."

"You see for yourself, it's hopeless—utterly hopeless." And Kathleen dropped her hands to her sides,

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with a gesture of impotence. " You say, ' Get people out here.' Well, that's what happens when they come."

" Very annoying. So stupid to remind him."

" *Everything* reminds him," and Kathleen spoke with great energy. " Dr. Bryant, it's hopeless to go on treating him as if he were a child. Even if that idiot hadn't spoken, it would have been just the same."

" How do you mean ? "

" Why, something else would have reminded him. An hour ago it was the newspaper speaking about Bevistown. *That* set him thinking of it."

" Did it ? Did he say so ? "

" No—he doesn't say so. But he is always thinking of it—*always*."

" Ah ! That's what I was afraid."

" But why are you afraid ? Surely it's natural. He has been thinking about it for fifteen years—how could he really leave off thinking of it ? He has done what you told him—to shut it up, never to refer to it. But, Dr. Bryant, surely it was better for him to talk about it as he used to do ? . . . It was a relief—an outlet. . . . I know how clever you are ; but this last week—doing all you told me—I've felt certain you are wrong about father."

" It is quite possible," said Bryant very humbly.

" I can't understand the meaning of your advice. It seems so unnatural—as if you thought something that you don't explain. When you say he is all right now, you seem to think that he might be very ill soon. Dr. Bryant, please don't keep anything back from me. What is it that you really are afraid of ? "

" It is rather difficult to explain," said Bryant, after a pause, as if carefully choosing his phrases.

" But my fear is this. It is a bad habit—really quite an injurious habit—to concentrate one's mind on a

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single subject, especially if a sad, wearying subject. One is apt then to exalt the single idea until it excludes all others. . . . With certain temperaments it may in time lead one from hard facts into the realm of idle fancies—of erroneous perceptions."

"Erroneous perceptions!"

Kathleen's forehead had gathered in her characteristic frown; as she listened she showed doubt, surprise, and alarm.

"And with your father, *there* would be the danger."

"Danger?"

"Yes, considerable danger that he should sink into his own thoughts and imaginations—well, until they became realities, and the life all round him became unreal—a sort of shadowland."

Kathleen repeated the last word in a frightened whisper.

"Shadowland! . . . Oh, that would be horrible," and she shuddered. "No, no, that *can't* happen."

XXIII

DR. BRYANT, perhaps feeling conscientiously compelled to sound a warning note, had alarmed Kathleen a great deal more than he intended; now he was endeavouring to reassure her.

"You may rely on everything I have told you about his bodily health. And as to anything else, there is perhaps no need to anticipate—or upset ourselves with vague apprehensions."

Kathleen quickly recovered composure. She seemed to be thinking for herself now, and no longer listening to the voice of science. Presently she spoke with sudden strength of conviction.

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"No, you don't understand him, Dr. Bryant. You can't understand him—because you don't really know him. *I* know my father." She said this proudly and enthusiastically. "And for me to fear—to fear what you hint at—would be cowardly and ungrateful."

Then the morning-room door opened, and Donaldson was heard speaking loudly and joyously.

"A thousand thanks! Big-minded—large-hearted." And he and General Mallock came into the hall. "Miss Mallock, three golden moments. My prayer granted! . . . Come now to your stables, sir, and speak the good word. He shall kneel to you, if you wish it."

"Who," asked Kathleen, "is to kneel?"

"Knee?" said General Mallock. "Of course not. . . . It's the groom—what's his name—Curtis—that Richards was dismissing. Kathleen, Richards mustn't do that."

"Mustn't he, father? Remember what he told you—that Curtis is incorrigibly lazy."

"But he'll work," said Mr. Donaldson eagerly. "now he has been shown mercy. He is to be given another chance."

"Another chance!" General Mallock echoed the words tonelessly. "That's only justice—not mercy. We all ask for that."

"Come, sir, come." Mr. Donaldson gently pulled the General by his coat-sleeve, and led him away. "Glad tidings! See his face—poor boy—when he hears the glad tidings. His face will reward you;" and joyously waving his shovel hat, he drew the General out through the porch.

Kathleen looked at the little man's retreating figure, and her face expressed cold dissatisfaction.

"Dr. Bryant, I have tried to like your friend; but on the whole I think he is an odious person."

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Bryant smiled. "He is an *enthusiast*. Quite genuine, you know."

"Oh, I am sure he isn't an imitation."

"And there's no exaggerating his power over his own people."

"Yes, but isn't it rather an impertinence to come bothering father about *our* people?"

"If so, it's principally my fault. I purposely encouraged him to come up—because even in bothering he will do your father good. Trust my advice as far as this;" and Bryant smiled again, and spoke with a confident cheerfulness. "It's ten times better to be bothered by other people's troubles than to be bothering about one's own troubles. I am absolutely certain that it is wise—and *necessary*—to make your father take a more active part in life. And that's just what Mr. Donaldson is doing now. But I'll go and see that he isn't overdoing it, if you like."

"Yes, I wish you would."

The sound of Bryant's footsteps on the gravel outside died away and then seemed immediately to return, growing heavier as they came. But these were other footsteps.

Kathleen, looking at the open porch, heard Keighley's voice and started.

"You had better wait out here. Then I'll call you presently."

"Yes, my lord."

Then Keighley, leaving his companion outside, appeared in the sunlit doorway.

"You needn't ring the bell," said Kathleen, smilingly, but rather nervously. "Please come in."

"Good morning. Your father expects me?"

"Yes."

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"Perhaps," said his lordship stiffly, "I should explain that my visit is solely concerned with public affairs."

"Is it?"

"Yes. Otherwise you might think it odd my coming here."

"Oh, no."

"I shall not, of course, intrude my private affairs."

"Lord Keighley, aren't we to be friends—still?"

"Friends! Certainly. If my manners appear constrained," and he gave a forced laugh, "it is that I don't know what is appropriate for a rejected suitor. It's a position which—frankly—I didn't expect to occupy, and I therefore never prepared myself for it."

"I'm sorry."

"But you haven't changed your mind?"

"No."

"I am vain enough still to attribute my disappointment to the same cause. You were offended with me because I failed about the new J.P.'s."

"No, it wasn't that."

"You set me an impossible task. I tried my hardest."

"Then it was kind of you."

Keighley suddenly bristled.

"Something turned you against me. That's very evident. . . . However, I'll not be so absurd as to reproach you—or else, yes, upon my word, I might be tempted to ask you why you ever encouraged me."

"I am very sorry if I ever seemed to do so," and Kathleen's face flushed.

"I beg your pardon. I didn't intend to say that—I didn't mean it."

Kathleen hesitated, and then spoke with candid earnestness.

"Lord Keighley, do let us be friends as we used to

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be. I hate to think that you should feel distressed about this in the midst of all your anxieties."

"Thank you. . . . Well, I don't mind owning I'm getting worried to death. Who wouldn't be, with all I have on my hands?" and Keighley began to recover his old air of stolid self-importance. "Here am I—really fighting to preserve the fabric of society, and scarcely a soul—from the Home Secretary downwards—supporting me loyally."

"We'll support you with good wishes—at least."

"I hope so. And your father might give me a little more than that." Keighley looked round mysteriously, and lowered his voice. . . . "This *should* be the camp of an ally—but we have discovered an enemy in the camp."

"No?"

"One of your servants."

"One of our servants?"

"Yes, I have brought Gilchrist with me to explain the whole matter;" and Keighley looked round again, and became more mysterious and important. "It's a stableman, and I understand that—very properly—he has been given notice to leave your service. But now Gilchrist fears that an attempt will be made to get at the General."

"Oh, Lord Keighley, he *has* been got at; Mr. Donaldson came pleading—"

"And do you mean your father has given way, when I—?"

"Yes, but what a shame! Father, of course, had no idea—Oh, how mean and underhand of Mr. Donaldson!"

Keighley seemed bursting with indignation, and Kathleen was excessively indignant also. She hastily summoned O'Kelly, and sent him to the stables to fetch her father immediately.

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

"Be quick. Say he is wanted at once. Say Lord Keighley wants him without a moment's delay."

O'Kelly performed his errand with speed, if not with discretion. In a surprisingly short time, he flung open the baize door and produced the General, who was hurriedly followed by Bryant and Donaldson. He had brought them through the servants' quarters, as the shortest cut from the stable yard to the hall; and evidently it had been a forced march, a sudden call without any explanation. General Mallock looked flustered and puzzled; Bryant looked surprised and anxious. Mr. Donaldson's expression was one of bland inquiry.

"Er—what is it, Keighley? What's the matter?"

"Father, you hadn't heard, you didn't know that Curtis—"

"Curtis, your servant," said Keighley impressively, "is in daily communication with the strikers."

"Mr. Donaldson," said Kathleen energetically, "it was very wrong of you not to tell us."

"What ought I to have told you," said Donaldson mildly. "That Curtis had incurred Lord Keighley's displeasure?"

"Yes, certainly."

Mr. Donaldson smiled archly. "Would that have been good dipplummicity?"

"Really, General," said Keighley, "you must adhere to your decision, and get rid of him."

General Mallock looked feebly from Lord Keighley to Mr. Donaldson.

"Well, but I have just made another decision—to keep him."

"Then you countenance my avowed enemies."

"Can I go back from my word?"

"Extorted from you under false pretences!"

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

"Nay, nay, my lord," protested Donaldson. "That cannot pass."

"This man goes to and fro between General Mallock's house and the cottages across the moor."

"Why not?"

"He is in close league with the ringleaders of all the mischief."

"Yes," said Donaldson very mildly, "he is a nephew of Denham—the poor fellow your manager shot."

"A court of law," said Keighley warmly, "has acquitted Gilchrist. It was an accident—for which he is blameless."

"Yes, but the man was almost killed—accidentally—by shooting. You cannot wish him to be killed—accidentally—by starving;" and Donaldson turned to General Mallock. "Curtis—poor lad—carries his wages across the moor. He is a bird bringing food to a hungry nest."

"If," said Keighley, "they are ever hungry——"

"If! Friend Bryant," and Donaldson turned to the doctor. "You see things on your rounds."

"Yes, I see some empty cupboards and pinched faces."

"Bravo," cried Donaldson. "Well said. Come on my side. . . . My lord, don't lose sight of charity. A little moderation!"

Keighley shrugged his shoulders.

"Mr. Donaldson," said Kathleen, "why don't you preach moderation to the men?"

"I do. I did last Sunday for over two hours—morning and evening service."

Keighley drew General Mallock aside, and urgently expostulated.

"My dear General, don't be led astray by sentimental considerations."

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

"But my word. How can I go back from my word?"

"It will have the worst possible effect."

"You see, Keighley," said the General feebly, "my position is different from other people's. I'm a person divested of importance. I don't exist. So it can't matter what I do, either way."

"But listen to what Gilchrist says. I have brought him here to tell you the plain facts. At least listen to Gilchrist;" and Keighley went to the front door, and called loudly for his manager.

At the name of Gilchrist, little Mr. Donaldson had jumped round in surprise.

"Is Mr. Gilchrist here?" And he raised his eyes, gazed at the high ceiling above the upper gallery, and spoke with extraordinary earnestness. "Can there be guidance in this? . . . Yes, it *must* be guidance."

"Now," said Lord Keighley.

Mr. Gilchrist came through the porch, and bowed to right and left. He was a big middle-aged man, who had a florid complexion, bushy eyebrows, and grey mutton-chop whiskers. With his square billycock, pepper and salt suit, and dog-skin gloves, he looked like a prosperous farmer or bailiff rather than a deputy captain of labour; his manner at present seemed extremely deferential, even sycophantic; and yet somehow there was a suggestion that, although so polite to his social superiors, he might be hard and domineering with subordinates.

"Now," repeated Keighley. "Tell General Mallock what you know for certain about—"

"Stop," interrupted Donaldson. "My lord, never mind side issues. Forget Curtis. Discuss the larger question. I believe—nay, I am sure the finger of Providence has brought this about. You decline to meet the men—or their authorized representative."

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

"Because they decline to treat with *my* authorized representative," and Keighley indicated Gilchrist.

"Just so. But you both stand here together, guided here by Providence—to meet *me*."

Keighley laughed contemptuously.

"Let me speak for the men—quite unauthorized by them. Don't refuse. It can do no harm. It may do much good—"

"Upon my word, Mr. Donaldson, I don't know why you should busy yourself—"

"I'm improving the shining hour—a busy bee."

"A busybody."

"Capital! Excellent!" Donaldson laughed gaily. "But will you hear me?"

"No, I won't."

"Be persuaded." Donaldson looked round at the others. "Come on my side—the side of peace. General, lend me your weight."

"I have no weight."

"You are old and experienced. A word from you. . . . Miss Mallock! You are young and charming. Your word will turn the scale."

"Of course," said Kathleen doubtfully, "if it is understood that Lord Keighley is not committed in any way."

"Bravo," cried Donaldson. "Come on my side. . . . Dr. Bryant—in the name of your noble profession!"

Bryant had whispered something to Kathleen, and now he addressed her father.

"General, wouldn't you advise Lord Keighley that this is perhaps an opportunity?"

"It *is*," said Donaldson with enthusiasm. "It's the golden opportunity—the syklogicle moment."

"Lord Keighley," said Kathleen, "Mr. Donaldson has great influence."

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

"Very great indeed," said Bryant. "General, don't you agree with me that Lord Keighley should hear him?"

"I? Oh—er—yes, I agree."

"Oh, very well," and Keighley shrugged his shoulders again. "Since you are all so keen about it."

"Informally," said Gilchrist. "Not binding your lordship."

"No, no," cried Donaldson. "Quite informally. Capital!"

"Then in that case," said General Mallock, looking vaguely for his hat. "Then—yes—I'll leave you to your discussion."

"Don't let him go," said Bryant, in a quick undertone to Kathleen. "Make him take part in it."

"Father, they want you. Don't go."

"Yes," said Bryant firmly. "We can't get on without you, General."

"Yes," said Donaldson, "all stay, please;" and he rested one hand on the hall table, and with the other covered his eyes for a few moments.

On the opposite side of the table Keighley stood with his back to the chimneypiece, and Mr. Gilchrist was whispering to him. Bryant and Kathleen had intercepted General Mallock as he moved towards the porch; and, standing with him, they formed a group of presumably attentive listeners as Donaldson dropped his hand and opened the debate.

"My lord," he began, very mildly and deprecatingly. "These rough coarse gangs of men—do you know what they are really?"

"Yes. Infernally ungrateful."

"No one," said Gilchrist, "could have done more for them than his lordship."

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

"They're not really ungrateful. They're like children. We are all children in our hearts—just leetle children."

Keighley once more shrugged his shoulders.

"Now, there's the keynote. Can you think of them for a minute as so many children confided to your charge?"

"I have never forgotten my duty to them."

"Say they have been naughty children, and now you are punishing them—"

"They are punishing themselves. They could go back to their work to-morrow."

"But only on your terms."

"The terms are just and reasonable—I might say generous."

"Almost too generous," said Gilchrist.

"Nay," said Donaldson fervently, "that's impossible. We can't be too generous;" and he went on in a wheedling tone. "If, my lord, you would stretch a point—go a leetle way towards—"

"Tell me to cave in at once—say, 'Thank you, Mr. McGaher—and I am dismissing my manager because you ordered me to do so'?"

"I have already told his lordship," said Gilchrist, "that, rather than cause him any further trouble and annoyance, I am quite prepared to go. I take this opportunity of again offering my resignation."

"And I refuse to accept it."

"Ah, Mr. Gilchrist," cried Donaldson with tremendous enthusiasm, "there lies the s'lution of the problem. Don't offer to resign. Do it."

"If his lordship wishes."

"I don't wish it. I won't allow it."

Bryant touched Kathleen's arm. The debaters were absorbed in their argument; no one had called

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"Very great indeed," said Bryant. "General, don't you agree with me that Lord Keighley should hear him?"

"I? Oh—er—yes, I agree."

"Oh, very well," and Keighley shrugged his shoulders again. "Since you are all so keen about it."

"Informally," said Gilchrist. "Not binding your lordship."

"No, no," cried Donaldson. "Quite informally. Capital!"

"Then in that case," said General Mallock, looking vaguely for his hat. "Then—yes—I'll leave you to your discussion."

"Don't let him go," said Bryant, in a quick undertone to Kathleen. "Make him take part in it."

"Father, they want you. Don't go."

"Yes," said Bryant firmly. "We can't get on without you, General."

"Yes," said Donaldson, "all stay, please;" and he rested one hand on the hall table, and with the other covered his eyes for a few moments.

On the opposite side of the table Keighley stood with his back to the chimney-piece, and Mr. Gilchrist was whispering to him. Bryant and Kathleen had intercepted General Mallock as he moved towards the porch; and, standing with him, they formed a group of presumably attentive listeners as Donaldson dropped his hand and opened the debate.

"My lord," he began, very mildly and deprecatingly. "These rough coarse gangs of men—do you know what they are really?"

"Yes. Infernally ungrateful."

"No one," said Gilchrist, "could have done more for them than his lordship."

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

"They're not really ungrateful. They're like children. We are all children in our hearts—just leetle children."

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on General Mallock to take any share of the talk, and he had quietly drifted away to the hall door and was now going out into the garden. Kathleen, too late to retain him, turned and followed him.

"Listen," Donaldson was saying earnestly, "listen, Mr. Gilchrist, to the secret voice inside you—not to my lord's voice. Your presence ties him. It rests with you to cut him free;" and he resumed his wheedling tone. "Go out into the world, and seek employment elsewhere. The world is so large—so pleasant. You'll find happiness for yourself, and leave happiness behind."

"Ridiculous!" said Keighley, with a scornful snort.

"No. Wise. Good;" and Donaldson waved his hand above his head and spoke more loudly. "It's the s'lution—perhaps the only s'lution. See into these men's hearts," and he turned from Keighley to Gilchrist. "They think there's blood on your hands—*their* blood. There's peril in that red stain. No court of law can wipe it out." He was pointing at Gilchrist, who slightly recoiled and put his ungloved hand behind his back. "It is there—visible! . . . Those people are human, ignorant, men of strong passions."

"I thought," said Keighley sneeringly, "they were innocent little children."

"So they are. I can lead them, and control them, but I do it by gentleness—dipplummicity. I don't attempt force."

"No more does his lordship," said Gilchrist. He had taken out a handkerchief, and was wiping his forehead.

"No," said Keighley, "I simply deny their right to dictate to me."

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"Their right? No, right is a big word. But suppose they count on a bigger word—not right, but *might*."

"Are you threatening me on their behalf or your own?"

"Threatening! Heaven forbid. I'm the representative of peace." Both voices had been perhaps unconsciously raised, and Donaldson was speaking with some warmth. "Nevertheless, I warn you, Lord Keighley, that—"

"And I warn you, Mr. Donaldson, that I mean to stand firm. I won't budge one inch from my position."

"You have no wife or chick to soften you. The mainspring of your life is pride. But now, if you could conquer it, what a vict'ry! Oh, what a vict'ry! How much better than winning in any contest with these men—where wealth and rank are arrayed against famine and sickness, where—"

"Forgive me saying that when I want to hear a sermon I go to the Parish church."

"But perhaps," said Donaldson, thoroughly nettled, "they are more afraid of the truth in your church than they are in my chapel."

Keighley was puffing out his cheeks and swelling wrathfully. He turned to the fireplace and spoke over his shoulder abruptly.

"General Mallock, it is useless to continue our discussion."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Donaldson. Contrite for his recent heat, he leaned both hands on the table, and again spoke wheedlingly. "Dear me—This is bad dipplummicity, if I've only made you angry."

"General," said Keighley, "I repeat my request to you. Then he looked round. "What? Has he gone?"

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"Yes," said Bryant apologetically, "he went out into the garden."

"Well, I'm hanged," and Keighley snorted indignantly. "D'you mean he didn't stay to listen? That beats everything."

Mr. Gilchrist was buttoning his dog-skin gloves, and he respectfully asked if he might withdraw.

"I need not remain any longer, my lord?"

"No."

"Then good morning, gentlemen." At the hall door he bowed to right and left.

Donaldson picked up his shovel hat, hesitated, and then addressed Lord Keighley very gently and pleadingly.

"Can't you give me anything to take back with me? . . . I would love to go back with a leetle olive branch, however small—like a dove flying across this flood of passion and grief."

Keighley plunged his hands in his pockets, squared his big shoulders, stared at the would-be dove, and then vainly attempted to speak good-humouredly.

"Tell your naughty children that I intend to be master. Not an unkind master—but I won't put up with nonsense."

"Ah!" Donaldson shook his head sadly and regretfully, and moved towards the hall door. "Friend Bryant, are you coming?" He stood for a moment in the bright sunlight outside the porch, and then disappeared.

Keighley was fuming. He walked up and down the hall with hands plunged in his pockets, shoulders shrugging, and cheeks puffed out as if swelled by indignation.

"Upon my word, Bryant, it is really too bad of old Mallock not to help me."

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"He is not strong enough to help you."

"Then if he can't help, he needn't hinder me. This ranting fool Donaldson will go back to the men and tell them my own friends are against me."

"I don't think he'll do that."

"Of course he will. He'll say he scored off me—got expressions of sympathy from the good and venerable old General. Cranky old ass! He grants Donaldson's request behind my back—and then slinks out of the room without waiting to hear my side of the case. He must be mad not to see that by encouraging—he must be simply insane."

"Well," said Bryant gravely, "isn't that a sufficient excuse for anything?"

"Of course I don't mean that he's what *you'd* call insane. But—"

"I'm not so sure. Lord Keighley, you're a friend of the family. I've been watching him for a long time, and I don't like his condition."

"What's wrong?"

Bryant glanced out at the gravel drive, then up at the stairs, and spoke in a low voice. "He shows unquestionable signs of monomania. . . . Don't you notice his cloudy manner?"

"But wasn't he always like that—a bit queer?"

"This is more than *queer*. He doesn't listen to what is said. He doesn't *hear* what is said. He left the room just now because he had forgotten why we asked him to stay. He was lost in his own thoughts."

Keighley's indignation had swiftly evaporated. He took his hands out of his pockets, and spoke with genuine concern.

"Well, but, Bryant, that's very alarming."

"In my opinion it could not be more so. If he isn't quite what we call certifiable, at any rate he

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is a very unsafe guardian for two charming young ladies."

"Exactly."

Bryant was studying Keighley's face, and he could see in it nothing but kindness, sympathy, and good-nature. He hesitated before speaking again, as if endeavouring to make up his mind; then he spoke decisively.

"Now if I were a family friend—instead of merely being a medical attendant,—I know what I should be trying to find."

"Some comfortable asylum or home for him?"

"No, a comfortable asylum or home for his daughters—to be provided by some suitable, eligible person who would kindly marry Miss Kathleen."

Keighley's face changed. He stared at Bryant, and spoke very stiffly. "I don't think Miss Mallock will have to wait long for matrimonial chances."

"No, indeed," said Bryant, and it was impossible to misunderstand the character and the strength of the feeling behind his words—"she wouldn't have to wait a day—if I happened to be the suitable eligible person. But I don't happen to be."

"No—what? Really?"

"For I think that she is a most noble splendid girl. . . . Hush. . . . Hush! . . . Good morning to you, Lord Keighley."

"Ah—good morning to you."

Voices were approaching. Bryant went out, and took leave of Kathleen; and Keighley saw him stroll past the unshaded window with Mollie and Mr. Cartwright.

Keighley was standing with an arm on the chimney-piece, and meditatively staring at the hearth, when Kathleen re-entered the hall.

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"Are you very angry with father?"

"No. Oh, no."

"It isn't his fault."

"It doesn't in the least matter," said Keighley in the kindest possible tone. All trace of his resentment and displeasure had disappeared; there was neither stolidity nor pompousness: he was Keighley at his very best.

"If you had only come to him sooner."

"I oughtn't to have come at all. Purely my own business. Why worry other people?" And he went on pleasantly and easily: "I was full of myself just now when you honoured me by saying I was to be your friend—as I couldn't be anything else. Well," and he spoke with great earnestness, "I want to be that—a real friend. So that if ever you were in any unexpected difficulty, you'd turn to me with confidence."

"Thank you," said Kathleen cordially.

"A *real* friend, remember—to you and to your sister."

"You're very generous."

"Generous! Kathleen, change your mind. Give me the right to be of use."

"No, don't go back to that;" and Kathleen turned away with a gesture of weariness.

"I must go back to it. Why won't you?"

Kathleen looked at him again, and spoke sadly but proudly.

"Why? Because I couldn't marry anyone who didn't respect my father."

"I do respect him."

"No, you don't, Lord Keighley."

"I *will* respect him. I'll be a good son-in-law; I'll be a good brother-in-law;—and I'll be a thundering good husband."

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"I think," said Kathleen bitterly, "you are very foolish—everyone would tell you so. A family under a cloud! A most undesirable connection."

"My wife would be my wife."

"But she might not care to shelter herself behind your greatness."

"She wouldn't have to." Then he spoke with the unexpected emotional force of a naturally reserved man. "Kathleen, you're a ripper, a tip-topper, and I should be proud—bursting with pride—to say, 'This is my wife.'"

"No."

"Yes."

Suddenly he clasped his hands round her waist and tried to draw her to him. "You did like me. You know you did."

"Let me go."

With her head thrown back and her arms stretched to ward him off, she was trying to escape from his embrace; but he held her firmly.

"Why won't you?"

"I can't."

"You encouraged me to think you would."

"Let me go. . . . Lord Keighley, how can you be so horrid?"

"Say that you do care for me—just a little."

"Yes, I do care for you."

"But not enough?"

"Not enough to make me desert father."

"It wouldn't be deserting him. It will be best for him too."

"No."

"I won't take that answer. You're not to answer now. Think of it."

"Oh, please let me go."

"Promise to think of it."

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"Yes—I'll think of it."

Then he released her; and she darted away from him, and went over to the hearth, and looked at her flushed face in the glass over the mantelpiece. The light laughing voices of Mollie and her sweetheart sounded close at hand.

"Suppose," said Kathleen breathlessly—"just suppose they had seen us."

"I wish they had," said Keighley.

Mollie, while walking about the garden with Mr. Cartwright, had quite succeeded in restoring his self-confidence and composure, and now she was still too much occupied with care of him to observe either the agitation or breathlessness of her sister or the unusually animated air of Lord Keighley.

"Kath, are we never to have any food?" she asked gaily.

But then almost immediately O'Kelly opened the dining-room door and announced the meal.

"Luncheon is ready. Will I beat the gong?"

"No," said Kathleen, "we are all here."

"Father isn't here," said Mollie.

"I'll fetch him. Don't wait. Please go in, and begin. . . . Mollie, go in."

"Then come along," said Mollie. "I'm sure you must both be ravenous;" and she led the way into the dining-room.

Cartwright smilingly kept back for Keighley to go next; but his lordship with gracious smiles urged the young man to precede him.

"Well," said Cartwright, "if you insist—and anyhow I mustn't stop the gangway."

"No," said O'Kelly, "the General wouldn't wish ye to wait. Don't stand on ceremony;" and, following Cartwright, he too took the *pas* of the nobleman.

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Keighley by the dining-room door looked across the hall at Kathleen, whispered her name and kissed the tips of his fingers.

"Kathleen. . . . Think of it." Then he went after O'Kelly to the luncheon-table.

When he had gone, Kathleen turned towards the open porch, looked at the sunlit space outside; and then, suddenly turning away, she produced a handkerchief and began twisting it in her hands.

On the other side of the hall the sunshine poured in more brightly than ever; colour and life seemed to flash from all it touched; rainbow rays danced before the metal gong, the case of the tall clock, and the blue and white vase near the dining-room door; but the shadow thrown towards her on this side of the hall seemed every moment to grow deeper and heavier. From the dining-room came the pleasant murmur of cheerful voices. Mollie laughed gaily—a clear ripple of happy music.

Presently Kathleen dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief, put it resolutely in her pocket, and slowly turned from the hearth.

"Father!" And she started violently. "I didn't see you there. . . ."

General Mallock had silently entered: he was standing motionless in the shadow near the window, and intently gazing at the floor.

"Father—come in to lunch."

"No—you go. I'll follow. I'm thinking of a fable. . . . Kathleen, you didn't see me. . . . Once there was a man whom the gods took pleasure in punishing. It was said he had committed a great crime, and wherever he went he was blamed and scoffed at—till he could not bear the eyes of the world, and he prayed for release from torment. . . . Then the gods made

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him invisible. The man was gone. *Only the shadow remained.* Wherever he passed—ignored, unchallenged, unseen—the shadow still fell."

"Father!"

"Kathleen, I think it has happened to me. Look!" And with a slow movement of his arm he indicated the boundary of the sunlight at a little distance from him on the floor. "Listen!"

Again there came the pleasant sound of laughing voices.

"Kathleen, listen. They are gay and light-hearted. I must keep away. If I go in there, my shadow will fall upon them. . . . You go. That's your place—outside the shadow."

Kathleen went quickly to him and threw her arms round his neck.

"No, my place is with you, father. Not only now—but always."

XXIV

BRYANT, struggling to stamp out every personal consideration and to think only of what was best for others, had told Keighley that Kathleen needed the protection of a husband, and that now was the time for a husband to come forward. He had been able to do this; and in doing it had felt emotion, but little pain. Yet it was an achievement that seemed very like a complete conquest of self.

Can altruism reach a greater height than this—to lose one's dearest hope, to see that someone else has a chance of winning all that fate has denied to oneself, and then to urge the successful rival to grasp the splendid prize? Perhaps Dr. Bryant had astonished

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even himself by this undeniable proof of chivalry and fortitude.

Had it been rendered possible by the deepening strength of professional instincts—that single-hearted striving for the welfare of the patient which makes the whole family a sacred charge, and turns a doctor into a priest? Or was it that the sick physician, bravely labouring to heal others, had unconsciously healed himself? In a word, was Bryant, without as yet knowing it, practically cured and nearly quite sound again?

If so, there had been an undetected agency operating—operating, indeed, as imperceptibly as some palliative drug whose effects are cumulative. One may take a lot of such a drug without noticing any result; perhaps it is not until the system is saturated with it that one becomes sensible of its potent influence.

Of late Dr. Bryant had been seeing a good deal of his two neighbours, Mrs. and Miss Purvis.

One evening they had prevailed on him to stay to supper in their rooms over the grocer's shop. He was paying a late visit; and when he had told Mrs. Purvis what should be done for a rheumatic knee, and Miss Purvis how she should do it, they would not let him go.

"You *have* had such a long day," said Miss Purvis. "You *can't* be doing any more work;" and she glanced at him very bashfully, but very kindly. "You don't know how tired you look. Mother, doesn't Dr. Bryant look completely fagged?"

"Yes, Sophy, he does;" and Mrs. Purvis continued with smiling determination. "Now, Dr. Bryant, I'm going to take an old woman's privilege and treat you as if you were my own son—and I'm sure you are always as kind and considerate to me as any son could

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be. This is not an invitation, but a command. Supper is ready, and you are just going to sit down with us and have a meal in comfort for once."

"Now you can't refuse," said Miss Sophy; "or mother will never speak to you again."

"No more I would," said Mrs. Purvis, laughing good-humouredly. "But he won't defy me. Age has its privileges, Dr. Bryant."

Perhaps without any, or very little, previous discussion between the mother and daughter, there was a certain amount of concerted method in their pressing hospitality. Or by some rapid intuition of sympathetic solicitude both of them may have divined that their doctor was unhappy as well as tired, and that it was incumbent on all friends to console him as far as lay in their limited power.

It was a nice hot supper, served in a neat homely style by a trim clean maid—certainly a more substantial and comfortable repast than he would have had on the other side of the street.

"You must take us as you find us," said Mrs. Purvis. "Now, Sophy, what have we here? Lamb chops! Very well, I've no quarrel with lamb chops—if properly cooked, as I hope they are. In *one* respect, Dr. Bryant, I'm quite the grand lady. I never know what is coming to table till I see it. Sophy there is my house-keeper."

They made much of him—seeming to wish that he would eat all the chops and empty the mint sauce vessel; offering him a choice of any wine in the grocer's stock downstairs; helping him to caramel pudding with a grotesque liberality; and sighing when he declined a share, however small, of the cheese savoury.

"Mummy," said Miss Purvis, when they went into

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the other sitting-room, "Dr. Bryant may smoke, mayn't he?"

"Of course he may."

But Dr. Bryant protested that he would not dream of committing such an outrage. A male guest in the drawing-room of two ladies—not to be thought of!

"What nonsense!" said Mrs. Purvis genially. "I know very well that an evening pipe is a necessity to gentlemen—especially you bachelor gentlemen who live all by yourselves. It's your only refuge from the blues. Although, for the matter of that, my dear husband used to smoke like a chimney."

"I like the smell of smoke," said Miss Purvis.

She had unobtrusively moved a small table to the side of Bryant's chair, and now, smiling amiably, she put a box of wooden matches on the table.

In sober truth Bryant was dying for a pipe, and had been wondering how soon he might decently bid them good-night and go.

"Pray light up," said Mrs. Purvis.

He protested a little more, and then obeyed.

The maid-servant brought in coffee, and the coffee was really delicious—so strong, so fragrant, so entirely different from the atrocious brew that his landlady habitually made for him on the other side of the street.

"Sophy," said Mrs. Purvis rather severely, "are you not forgetful? Surely Dr. Bryant will take a glass of the old brandy?"

"I'm sorry," said Miss Purvis meekly. "I did forget;" and she went to the cellar in the other room, and returned with a black bottle and some liqueur glasses.

"It's really old," said Mrs. Purvis. "Not out of the shop, you know. Some that my dear husband bought more years ago than I care to remember. She

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and I never touch it—we hoard it for great occasions. . . . Only a thimbleful for me, Sophy."

Dr. Bryant sipped the liqueur, drank his coffee, puffed at his pipe, and tried to stimulate himself to vivacious talk. He was really tired after a hard day; he felt numb and stupid, and yet vaguely conscious of a kind of creeping, insidious comfort. But the comfort was solely due to material sensations—the ease derived from shelter, warmth, nourishment—and totally devoid of all finer satisfaction. In these snug and friendly but altogether commonplace surroundings there could be no charm, no joy, no graceful seductions. He felt that, if not careful, he might at any minute fall asleep in his comfortable chair.

"Dr. Bryant," said Mrs. Purvis briskly, "do you know the Devil's Entanglement?"

"No," said Bryant, with a start.

"The Devil," said Mrs. Purvis, "is to me what your pipe is to you. I can scarcely get through the evening without my devil."

"Mummy," said Miss Purvis, giggling, "Dr. Bryant will think you are using bad language. . . . It's mother's patience, you know. If she does not play patience after supper, she always has a bad night. Would you think it very rude?"

"Rude! How can you ask?"

Miss Purvis produced another little table, with a green board, and four packs of diminutive cards; and her mother began to shuffle and deal.

"The Devil," said Mrs. Purvis, rapidly dealing her cards, "is the most difficult one of all."

"Mother's never yet had a success with it."

"But I've been near it often," said Mrs. Purvis; and she soon became absorbed and entangled in the game.

Miss Sophy, sitting on a low chair by Dr. Bryant's

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table, occupied her hands with some strange and futile task of stringing beads on silk threads, and bashfully explained that this work was for a charity.

"They hang it up—as an ornament—and it looks quite pretty when it's finished. I gave my last piece to the Whitby Orphanage."

"I'm sure they valued it."

"Oh, I don't know. But they did write me a sweet letter—the Superintendent did."

Bryant was vaguely wondering why Mrs. and Miss Purvis lived over the grocer's shop. Why did they live here in Ewesland? What chances or accidents had brought them to this disfigured edge of the moor and left them sticking fast for ever?

He lazily looked round the snug warm room that he had seen so often, but never observed till now. This furniture was ugly, but it was too good to be the property of the grocer—they had brought it with them. From where? Varnished chiffoniers, a walnut-wood sofa, chairs with velvet seats and ebony legs—those were made when the art sense lay inert under the long anaesthesia of the philistine rule. A trophy of wax flowers beneath a glass shade, a bronze clock, and a gilt statuette—those were also of the mid-Victorian period. But what on earth was the other thing with glass over it? A model of a boat? No matter!

"Are you looking at our picture-gallery?" asked Miss Sophy. "The engravings are all after Landseer."

A large dog and some antlered stags showed themselves in foggy black and white, between more distinct photographs of mountains, lakes, and cities; and the lamplight struck out a little feeble colour from an oil painting in a heavy gilt frame—portrait of a fat bearded man wearing a blue pea-jacket.

"That was father," said Miss Purvis, following the

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guest's eyes. " Taken when he was young. I can't remember him like that, but mother says it's like. He grew quite stout in later life."

" *Tscha!* " cried Mrs. Purvis loudly, and she shuffled her cards together rather angrily. " *Drat it!*" Then, however, she laughed good-humouredly. " He has been too many for me again. But I'll have one more try at him."

Bryant watched Mrs. Purvis as she redealt her cards. She wore a cap with lace and ribbons, and her grey hair was neatly parted in the middle ; her dress was of dark-hued silk, and a big gold locket hung amidst the folds of white lace on her broad bosom—she seemed an embodiment of dull middle-class respectability.

In a few moments the Entanglement held her again. Her face glowed with excitement, she frowned, nodded her head, and murmured ; and now and then she clutched at her knee and rubbed it dolorously. But it was not the rheumatic knee—and Bryant surmised that these spasmoid movements were caused by the devilish difficulties of the cards.

Miss Sophy was smiling at him, and he smiled at her with responsive politeness.

" She does so love it," said Sophy in a low voice ; and she stooped to pick more threads from a basket on the floor.

Bryant watched her now. Her fair hair was accurately parted in the middle and drawn back neatly on each side of her plump, round, pink and white face. The lamplight was not powerful enough to make her eyebrows distinguishable, but the eyelashes showed plainly while she leaned over the work-basket. And Bryant noticed the fullness and smoothness of her neck where fluffy light curls met the collar of her blouse. Her shoulders filled the blouse so completely that one

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could not see a crease in it. There was neither slimness nor grace about her figure—big shoulders, full bosom, wide waist; she was just a healthy, hearty young woman.

She had found the strings she wanted, and their eyes met. Bryant looked away, at some book-shelves by the hearth.

"I never noticed what a lot of books you had. Are you a great reader, Miss Purvis?"

"No, I'm ashamed to say I'm not. But mother is a regular book-worm."

"Tscha!" cried Mrs. Purvis. "He has done me again."

Outside in the silent street, as Bryant presently crossed it, he stretched himself sleepily and then looked up at the stars. They glowed with a pallid radiance from a cloudless sky—calm, splendid, immeasurably remote.

And his evening, now that it was over, seemed inexpressibly flat and dull—a drab-toned two hours in the narrow prison of conventionality, a glimpse of the warmed and curtained fireside life that is as empty and tedious as death.

Nevertheless it was not long before he endured this tedium once more. At the worst it was a temporary relief from the intolerable loneliness of his own rooms. He consented to sup with his neighbours again and again.

The mother and daughter seemed to improve on further and more intimate acquaintance. Old Mrs. Purvis was a kindly soul, possessed too of considerably greater cultivation than one would readily suspect—she quoted Shakespeare with aptness, spoke critically of the modern poets, and had a sound contempt for trashy, ephemeral literature. Not a bit common—

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intrinsically. Her manner of praising the daughter—before Sophy's blushing face and behind her solid well-covered back—was wearisome. Yet these praises, very possibly, were all deserved. Sophy seemed in truth a good kind of creature—but heavens, how uninteresting!

They had no secrets from Bryant now; he need never again wonder; he knew all that there was to know about them and their private affairs. They belonged to the south, but the late Purvis was a Yorkshireman—in fact Ewesland was his native place. He had been a sailor—merchant service,—then a partner of a small shipping firm; and he had invested his earnings in real estate.

"We always have our joke," said Mrs. Purvis, explaining it all, "that Lord Keighley is not the only landowner in these parts."

Their property comprised two or three farms with good homesteads down the vale, and several houses in the village, including this house and shop; and Mrs. Purvis had come to live at Ewesland so that she might look after the property wisely and economically, and not be at the mercy of rent-collectors and agents. It was all very sensible. When one has property of a troublesome kind, one must face the trouble of attending to it.

"And it *is* worth while," Mrs. Purvis added confidentially. "Yes, when I go, Sophy will be quite a little heiress. Five or six hundred a year, Dr. Bryant. That *is* something."

Habitually good management and frugality enabled them to indulge in occasional extravagance. Every summer they went to Scarborough and enjoyed life at a big expensive hotel.

"It is such a complete change for her," said Mrs.

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Purvis ; " and really it does my heart good to see the amount of admiration she receives. She never *seeks* it—for Sophy is retiring to a fault. But you know what hotels are—when you get a lot of high-spirited young men revelling in their holidays ; " and Mrs. Purvis laughed, as if stirred by vivid memories. " Last year, I assure you, Sophy had quite a little court—rather more than I cared about. I began to be scared by her success—I won't go into particulars. But between you and me, Dr. Bryant," and Mrs. Purvis looked grave, " I wasn't sorry to get her home here again."

On a morning when Bryant was paying a professional visit to the knee, Miss Purvis happened to be wearing a new hat, and Mrs. Purvis upset her by calling attention to it.

" Well, Dr. Bryant, what do you think of these fashionable hats ? "

" Mother, don't," and Miss Sophy blushed and giggled. " Dr. Bryant has other things to think of than the fashions."

The hat was like a bee-hive with a wreath of corn-flowers tied round it.

" Sophy," said Mrs. Purvis playfully, " I'll tell."

" No, please," said Sophy. " Mother, I wish you wouldn't ; " and her confusion became so great that she was forced to leave the room.

" I must tell now," said Mrs. Purvis, " or you might run away thinking it was some dreadful secret. . . . She made that hat herself."

And Mrs. Purvis went on to say how clever and thrifty was Miss Purvis in all that concerned the toilette.

" No one would believe the little that girl spends on her clothes. A born manager ! I boast to you of my economy, but it's she who is the real economist."

Then Sophy returned to the room without her hat,

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and Bryant was dimly aware of the mysterious change in the aspect of external objects as slowly they become familiar to us.

Miss Purvis, seen now in the clear morning light, afforded an instance of this metamorphosing power of use and intimacy. She looked so fresh and clean, so neatly dressed, that there was almost a charm in her healthy tidiness. A broad black leather belt made her waist appear comparatively small, and he noticed a wave in her hair as the sunlight touched it—really she looked almost pretty.

But she was obviously distressed. It seemed that she had been quite upset by her mother's reference to the new hat. Or perhaps she had overheard the subsequent praise of her cleverness and economy.

She followed Dr. Bryant downstairs to the side door by the shop, and spoke nervously and hurriedly.

"Mother doesn't mean anything when she talks like that. . . . I shouldn't know what to do—I should be miserable if you thought she meant anything."

Bryant failed to understand the drift of this speech. Surely Mrs. Purvis when praising her child—even when the praise was excessive or ill-timed—meant all she said?

"It makes me wretched," Sophy continued, with inexplicable perturbation. "But she will do it. I can't stop her. . . . And—and of course I do value your good opinion."

Blushes suffused her face; she turned away her head—but not before he noticed that her eyes had become moist. He, too, spoke nervously and hurriedly. He remembered at this moment what Mr. Donaldson had once said to him.

"Good-bye, Dr. Bryant," and Miss Purvis ran upstairs.

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When he reached home late in the afternoon he found a parcel and a note lying on his table.

"I wanted to say something to you just now,
"but then I felt I could not. I would like you
"to have my work for your dressing-table, and
"I will do another one for the charity. But
"please don't tell mother that I gave you this
"one. She will not know the difference when she
"sees me doing the other one.—SOPHY P."

The parcel contained a square piece of that preposterous bead work. Bryant took it out of its brown paper, stared at it, and carefully refolded it in the paper. Here was something for him to sit thinking about by his lonely hearth.

Not self-deception this time; no vain imagining or fatuous conceit. At last he had understood that Sophy was being frankly offered to him. He could not any longer say that nobody in the universe wanted him. Mrs. Purvis wanted him—Sophy wanted him.

He understood. This was an offer of reality in exchange for his dream. And he thought of it—the simple humdrum life; the kind, good, wholesome wife; the comfort of that five hundred a year.

They could have one of those substantial houses among the orchards below the bridge; they could add to it—a wing or abutment, with surgery and coachman's rooms; they could plant trees, shrubs, flowers;—and soon there would be children, sturdy, flaxen-headed little urchins whose laughter would sound from the paddock when they romped beneath apple-blossoms in the spring days; and in winter the house would be very snug, very warm,—very bright evenings with firelight and lamplight flashing on the transported chiffoniers, the glass that covered the

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model steamboat, and the oily blue of the sailor's peajacket ;—and his wife would stoop over a work basket, stitch, and look at him with meek affectionate eyes ; and he would sit reading and dozing ; and the old lady, playing patience by the fire, would rub her knee and cry “*Tscha!*” . . . Would that be his fate in the end ? O God, how dull, how trite, in lieu of the dream !

Perhaps henceforth he must always carry the thought with him—a picture seen in a reluctant glimpse, a picture that slowly would become familiar and distinct, taking more colour, growing warmer, stronger, on the blank cold background of his mind. Escape from effort, from the pains of vagrant imagination, from the recurrent pining after great things and small things that alike are unattainable—peace ?

XXV

THERE were no warm dishes at supper on Sunday night ; the maid had her evening out, and Mrs. and Miss Purvis waited on themselves.

When there came an unexpected knock at the sitting-room door each of the little party of three was startled.

“ Who’s that ? ” said Mrs. Purvis as the door opened.

It was Mr. Donaldson, seeming gloomy and depressed, and apologizing for this intrusion mechanically and without any of his usual exuberance.

“ I rang the bell, and nobody answered it—so I ventured to come up.”

“ Have you supped ? ” asked Mrs. Purvis hospitably.

“ Thank you, no—but I have no appetite for supper.

Friend Bryant, they told me over the way that you were here, and I pursued you, though loth to

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interrupt," and he glanced shrewdly and inquiringly at the pleasant comfortable domestic group.

Bryant held a carving knife in his hand. He had just cut a thin slice of ham, and Miss Sophy watched his skill and deftness admiringly, while her mother smiled with benign approval. Indeed Mrs. Purvis looked very comfortable and happy, like a contented parent sitting between an attentive son and daughter.

Donaldson was really sorry to drag the young man away, even for a few minutes ; but he wished to consult with him about something.

"I want to speak to you about the men," said Donaldson, when they got out into the street ; and he took Bryant's arm. "Let us walk down to the bridge and back again. Say fifteen minutes. I won't detain you longer. . . . Friend Bryant, I feel certain that the men are in a dangerous mood."

"What makes you think so ?"

"Many things." And Donaldson in a depressed tone told Bryant that the men had turned shy of him. He recognized a change in their attitude towards him ; he was not made welcome among the cottages, not even by his own chapel folk. And his congregation were dropping off ; to-night the chapel had not been half full. "I'm out of confidence with them, Bryant —they are shutting their hearts against me, and that makes me suspicious that they are hardening their hearts."

Another thing that troubled Donaldson's mind was a hint let fall by a woman who did charring work for his wife. He had severely questioned this woman, but he could get nothing explicit from her ; yet she had seemed to imply that she possessed knowledge. He could not but suspect that some reckless plans were being hatched.

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" You see, Bryant, they are beginning to feel the pinch. They have had no penny of strike pay—it is a self-sustained battle,—and perhaps now they dread that after all they are to be starved into submission. That's a thought to make them desperate—and, so sure as I stand here, I believe they are nearing desperation."

Then he asked Bryant if anything could be gained by approaching Lord Keighley once more.

" Can nothing be done? It is deplorable to be idle, if one can anyhow do good; " and he urgently entreated Bryant to go over to Redchurch next day, and again plead with Lord Keighley for the opening of conciliatory negotiations.

" It is no use for me to go," said Donaldson sadly. " His lordship dislikes me. I merely inflamed his passions. But he might listen to you."

" I don't for a moment believe he would."

" Nevertheless try it. Make the attempt boldly, and then you will have done what you could. . . . Warn him. Pray for leniency. Tell him to send away that man, if only for a time—then let him negotiate as a lord with his servants, and not as a dummy lord, a loud speaking-trumpet for the cruel voice of Gilchrist."

Bryant finally promised that he would call at Redchurch Park, and then Mr. Donaldson allowed him to go back to his supper.

" What a time he has kept you! " said Miss Purvis. " I began to think we should *never* see you again."

Lord Keighley received Dr. Bryant in the library at Redchurch, and he was unexpectedly pleasant and friendly until the visitor announced the nature of his mission. Then Lord Keighley's manner changed, and he would not listen either to a warning or a prayer.

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He flatly refused to discuss the question of the quarries ; his face assumed a stubborn look, he shrugged his shoulders, and cut Bryant short in the middle of a sentence.

But although he would not talk about the quarries, he was willing and ready to talk about anything else ; and Bryant noticed with a good deal of surprise, as well as some silent pleasure, that Keighley treated him more openly and cordially than he had ever done till now. It was as if a barrier between them had fallen ; the little flash of confidence when the doctor had disclosed his hidden strength of feeling seemed to have blown away all prejudices ; or perhaps since then Keighley had been carefully estimating the essential worth of Dr. Bryant's character. At any rate he appeared to be desirous of showing as plainly as possible that he now looked upon Bryant both as an equal and a friend.

But had Keighley acted, or was he going to act, on the advice of his new friend ?

Bryant, after a few minutes, asked a direct question.

" Did you think any more of what we spoke of the other day ? "

" Yes," said Keighley, " I have scarcely thought of anything else."

Then for a little while they talked very freely about General Mallock.

" And, Bryant, your opinion is unaltered ? "

" Quite unaltered. Every time I see him, I grow more uneasy."

" Have you seen him since then ? "

" Yes, once—and I shall go up there again as soon as I can."

" To-day ? "

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"No. I'm afraid I shan't be able to get there to-day. I've a long round before me."

"Then I mustn't hinder you."

But Keighley detained his visitor for some time still. He asked questions about the future. Did Bryant suppose that the General might break down suddenly, or would any change for the worse be gradual? And what precautions could be taken? Would it be possible to obtain a trained attendant? Was there any fear that with further deterioration the General might become violent and dangerous?

"It is never safe to prophesy," said Bryant; "but no, I should say that what one would have to dread would be danger to himself rather than to others."

"Suicide?"

"Yes. That is always indicated as a possibility—especially wherever an exaggerated sense of personal injustice is the cause of the trouble. . . . If it could be managed, what I should like would be to get some really good man to have a look at him. A general practitioner can't pretend to be a specialist—and my experience of mental cases is very small. Of course I may be altogether wrong."

"I wish you were. But I'm afraid you're not."

"No, honestly, I don't think I am—that is, to this extent. General Mallock is on the border line of insanity—and anything might push him over the line. At this moment I don't think I should hesitate to sign a certificate, if his friends desired to place him under surveillance and treatment. It would be justified as a precautionary measure."

Then they spoke of Miss Mallock, and Bryant dwelt on the difficulties of the position.

"I have told Miss Kathleen all that I considered it would be advisable to tell her. I alarmed her—perhaps

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inadvisably; but she showed me at once that nothing except dire necessity would persuade her to consent to any plan for restricting the General's liberty. She said in so many words that she felt it disloyal even to doubt his strength of mind."

"Yes, that would make it very difficult. . . . Bryant, would you say any more to her just now?"

"No, I think not. . . . No, on the whole, I think it would be wiser to leave her in peace now. But directly I can, I will suggest getting another opinion. And then perhaps you will be able to help me—by persuading her that she ought to consent."

"Yes, whenever you tell me."

"I think she will consent to that—because, if she does not believe in my judgment, it would seem only natural and proper to disprove it."

Keighley conducted Bryant through the empty rooms and vast hall to the outer steps, and parted with him very cordially.

"Good morning, Bryant—and many thanks. . . . Look here." This was in the tone of an after-thought. "I shall be riding over Redchurch Down in an hour or so, and, as you aren't going there to-day, I'll look in on our friends."

A couple of hours later Keighley was walking with Kathleen in the garden at Long Moor House. He said nothing to her on the subject of her father's health, but he said much to her about her own future and well-being.

"Kathleen," he urged plaintively, "you promised to think of it."

"And I *have* thought of it."

"Then please go on thinking of it. I simply can't take no for an answer."

"It is the only answer I can give you."

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"But you don't know how determined I am when I have once made up my mind. I always stick to it—and I shall stick to this, because I know my whole life depends on it."

She smiled at him with a cold, sisterly kindness. She looked pale and unhappy, but she was as firm as a rock. Her answer, after full and sufficient thought, was an irrevocable No.

At last they came up the meadow path to the drive, where his groom was holding the horses ; and Kathleen turned away towards the house.

"You leave me to mount all by myself ;" and Keighley laughed. "You don't care what happens to me."

"You have your groom to assist you to-day. Good-bye."

"No, au revoir ;" and as the horses were being led towards them, he whispered to her with unabated determination, "Kathleen, I'll never give you up. I shall stick to it like grim death."

Bryant had no opportunity of communicating with Donaldson that evening ; but next morning, before starting his round, he went up the hill to report the fruitless result of his errand to the quarry-owner.

Mr. Donaldson was not at home. He had left Ewesland for the day, and his servant did not know whether he would return at night.

Then Mrs. Donaldson, still in her grey night-cap, wrapped with a dubious dressing-gown, and looking agitated, pushed the servant aside and talked to Bryant volubly.

"He was summoned by telegram, first thing—a call to Leeds ; and he must needs go post-haste. I made him his breakfast—and he wouldn't touch it. Jane,

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there, ran out to beg him a lift—and he went down to Bevistown in the baker's cart. And now since he's gone, I'm fessing and tewing about it—that's why you see me like this. I haven't had the spirit to dress myself."

Mrs. Donaldson, it seemed, thought that her good husband had been in too much of a hurry to answer this mysterious call. He should have waited and debated the matter with her.

"How does he know it isn't a joke—some enemy making a fool of him? He ought to have telegraphed for the name of the party. But no, he's up and off like a sky-rocket. That's his way."

The telegraphic message, Mrs. Donaldson explained, purported to come from the Leeds Hospital, where a dying man desired the presence of the minister.

"If it was one of our lot, why didn't he sign it—or if a doctor wrote it, why didn't he give the party's name? I wish I had the telegram to show you, Dr. Bryant, for my husband's took it with him. It was long-worded, and there was a bit in it about the party having first found grace through Mr. Donaldson's sermons. . . . Yes, that did the trick, if it *was* a trick. The best of men have their weak spots; and my husband's weakness—God bless him—is vanity. Though I oughtn't to say it."

Then, with a rapid turn of thought, Mrs. Donaldson expressed fear.

"Or suppose it's a *trap*! Oh, Mr. Bryant, he *oughtn't* to have gone. He has enemies—he's too outspoken. Suppose he has been lured away by enemies—to get him over there in that great town, and fall upon him round some corner, and knock him about for his pains."

Bryant reassured Mrs. Donaldson. Her husband, he thought, would be as safe in the town of Leeds as in the

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village of Ewesland. He could not believe that Mr. Donaldson had a single real enemy, and he doubted if anyone, however stupid, could see a joke in causing him waste of time, toil, and money.

"D'you really think so, doctor? . . . Well, you put up my spirits again."

Bryant went down the hill and began his day's work. As he drove over the bridge he was pondering on the curious difference between Mrs. Donaldson as seen by Mr. Donaldson and the Mrs. Donaldson known to all the rest of the world. Was there always so wide a discrepancy in the vision of a loving husband and of a casual observer? But then one of his patients—an itinerant poultreer—stopped the phaeton, and banished all further thought of Mr. and Mrs. Donaldson.

"Are you going down Bevistown way, sir?"

"Yes."

"Of course you've heard what's happened there."

"No. What has happened?"

"Such a smash-up last night as you never saw, sir."

XXVI

It was an hour before tea-time; the sun-warmed air blew languidly and sleepily through the open windows at Long Moor, and the whole house seemed to be comfortably dozing when O'Kelly roused it by making a noise in the hall.

"The soldiers! The soldiers!" And he hurried to the front door. "A patrol coming off the moor! Hark now."

"What is it?" asked Kathleen, looking over the balusters of the gallery. "Why are you shouting like that?"

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" 'Tis the Hussars," said O'Kelly excitedly. " But what's brought 'em so far as this? Hark again."

Kathleen, coming downstairs, heard the sound of horses cantering along the gravel drive, and almost immediately an officer and a trooper rode up to the porch.

" Yes, by George, it's him," cried O'Kelly—" Our lieutenant, miss. . . . Good afternoon, sir. Ye're welcome anyhow, but what's brought you? "

" Where's General Mallock? "

" He's insoide, sir."

" Ask him to see me at once; " and Mr. Cartwright came through the porch, and saluted Kathleen. " Miss Mallock, I am in a hurry—as you may guess."

Lieutenant Cartwright in uniform and on duty was somebody very different from the bashful visitor who wore a lounge suit, fingered his fair moustache, and chuckled fatuously. He seemed now quietly alert and businesslike, but perhaps a little oppressed by the sense of vast responsibilities.

" What are you hurrying about, Mr. Cartwright? "

" Of course you've heard the news from Bevistown? "

" No. What news? "

" Last night there was a serious riot, and we had to charge—but what is more important, some of the mob were armed, and a good many shots were fired at us."

" You don't say so? "

" This morning fresh instructions reached us. . . . I've been out since nine o'clock, and our horses are done to a turn;—but we have just made a startling discovery—Oh, here is your father."

General Mallock, summoned by O'Kelly, had reluctantly left his desk in the inner room, and he carried a sheet of manuscript with him. He was wearing a

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pair of loose slippers, and these made him shuffle his feet as he slowly came into the hall ; stooping, blinking behind the spectacles, slowly turning his head with a dazed far-away air of interrogation, he looked very old, very feeble, very queer.

"Good-day, sir."

Mr. Cartwright saluted, and then briefly narrated his adventures. "We are out—since nine o'clock—in search of concealed arms. And we have just found some."

"Just found some," echoed General Mallock vaguely.
"Ah—some what?"

"Arms, sir."

"Arms?"

"In the thatch of an old shed, over there on the moor—a dozen magazine rifles under the thatch."

"Under the thatch?"

"And ten boxes of ammunition buried beneath the heather."

"How extraordinary!" said Kathleen. "Was it anywhere near here?"

"About a mile away. My men are bringing them on. Now, sir, what I want to ask is this—May we leave these things here until we can come and fetch them away? That is, till to-morrow?"

General Mallock's attention had wandered; he did not answer. So Kathleen spoke for him.

"Oh, of course you may leave them, Mr. Cartwright."

"You see, we can't very well be hampered with them now, or I would ask you to lend me a cart. But if we may stow them somewhere here. . . . Have you a cellar?"

"Yes."

"And speaking of the cellar," said O'Kelly,

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"wouldn't the Lieutenant be taking something after his ride?"

But Mr. Cartwright declined offers of refreshment either for himself or the troopers. He went outside the porch to wait for the arrival of his party. One could hear them approaching—horses' hoofs almost continuously, with now and then a pause in which there came the heavy footsteps of dismounted and burdened men.

"Father," said Kathleen, "isn't this extraordinary?"

"Yes," said the General, looking at the sheet of manuscript in his hand. "It is—ah—very extraordinary—and annoying. I was trying to write a fable."

"But we must do what Mr. Cartwright asks."

"Oh, yes. Why not?"

Mollie upstairs in her room heard the iron shoes upon the gravel, the clink of sheathed sabres, the rattle of chain bits, and going to a window could scarcely believe her eyes. Flat caps and khaki tunics, Hussars on horseback, Hussars on foot—a splendid group of unexpected visitors at the very door! Her sweetheart paying an afternoon call in military pomp. She rushed downstairs.

But Mr. Cartwright was entirely occupied with his business, and did not even notice the appearance of Miss Mollie. Some of his troopers had entered the hall now, and he and a sergeant, officially assisted by O'Kelly, were watching them bring in the rifles and the boxes that contained the cartridges.

"What beats me," said Mr. Cartwright, "is where the beggars got them."

"Dhirty louts too," said O'Kelly. "Foine mess they've made of 'em!" and he pointed at the dust and mould that the weapons had acquired in their hiding-place.

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"One, two, three." Mr. Cartwright was counting them. "Five, six—There were twelve in all. . . . Now, where's the cellar?"

"Pass through, sir," said O'Kelly. "Frederick, look out, and lend a hand there."

Frederick the footman stood gaping at the baize door.

"And ten boxes," said Mr. Cartwright. "That's five thousand rounds. . . . Now then, if you please."

Then the boxes and rifles were carried through the baize door, and Mr. Cartwright saw them carefully bestowed in one of the cellars.

"One—two—three. . . . Four." He was counting them again, as one trooper handed them to another down the cellar steps. "Eleven. . . . Eleven. I make that eleven. But where's the other one? There were twelve. There were twelve."

"Comin', sir," said O'Kelly. "Won't keep ye a moment."

O'Kelly had possessed himself of a rifle, and returned to the hall to show it to General Mallock.

"See now, sir," and with his handkerchief he tenderly wiped some of the disfiguring rust from the barrel. "An op-to date piece. Something bigger than our little toys, sir—and yet 'tis the same in the handling. Will ye try the feel of it, sir? Handle it, miss."

General Mallock and Kathleen were both examining the rifle—Kathleen with interest, her father very listlessly.

"My word," said O'Kelly, with a sigh of admiration, "I loike the feel of it. The rale article! . . . Yes, Oi'm bringing it to ye."

The Hussar sergeant had come back to the baize door; and O'Kelly, as if with regret, handed him the rifle, and fussily followed him.

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" 'Tis a dhry good cellar—an' Oi'll rub them op a bit perhaps for ye by the morning."

It was not until the soldiers had come through the hall again and were remounting their horses, that Mollie ventured any attempt to attract the attention of Mr. Cartwright, and even then she failed.

He seemed to be relieved in mind now, and yet still rather overweighted with professional cares.

" That's all right," he was saying to O'Kelly. " There wasn't a soul on the moor. No one saw us routing about. But what I'm thinking is, this was only *one* cache. Who knows how many there may be? Anyhow, I must get back now."

Then Mollie shyly advanced from the foot of the stairs and addressed him.

" How do you do, Mr. Cartwright? What a pleasant surprise!"

" On duty, Miss Mollie," said Mr. Cartwright impressively, as he saluted her.

" On duty? How exciting! What fun!"

" Yes—only unfortunately in a great hurry;" and he turned to General Mallock. " I'm much obliged to you, sir."

General Mallock had seated himself at the hall table and begun to read his interrupted manuscript. He did not raise his eyes from it.

" Ye can go away quite aisly," said O'Kelly. " They'll be safe wid us."

" Yes, no one saw us bringing them here. They'll be safe enough. But now, sir, the question arises . . ."

" Father," said Kathleen, " Mr. Cartwright is speaking to you."

" Eh? Oh, Mr. Cartwright?"

" The question is whether you and the ladies are safe here."

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"Safe? I don't understand. I am in my own house."

"Yes, sir, but this house unluckily is in such an isolated situation—miles away from help, if——"

"Help!" General Mallock blinked rather owlishly as he repeated the word. "Why should we want help?"

"Well, suppose they take it into their heads to come demonstrating in this direction?"

"Oh," said Kathleen, smiling, "they won't demonstrate to *us*."

"One never knows. Sir, I wish you and your daughters would pack a few things and come straight into Bevistown and stay at the Keighley Arms until this little rumpus has blown over."

"The Keighley Arms," said Mollie. "How nice!"

"Major Grinling's wife is there. Major Grinling would be glad, sir—just for a day or two."

"Thank you. I—yes—I feel more comfortable at home," and General Mallock looked round. "Yes, in my own home."

"Miss Mallock," said Cartwright, turning to Kathleen, "I wish you could manage it. I can't wait any longer, but I'll leave two of my men to ride with your carriage." Then he turned to the General again. "Don't you see, sir? This discovery puts such a different complexion on affairs."

"What discovery?"

"These rifles."

"Yes—of course—your rifles."

"All these fellows have been allowed to play the fool for three months because it was thought they couldn't mean mischief. Now they're completely out of hand. The government are alarmed. They take a serious view at headquarters."

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General Mallock got up, and shuffling in his slippers moved slowly to the door of the morning-room.

"Mr. Cartwright, I am quite outside the world of politics—no political influence of any sort. If I could be of service, I should naturally—yes—of course. . . . My compliments to—ah—Major Grinling."

"I can't persuade you to come?"

"No. Really no. But—ah—many thanks. . . . Let me see. Yes!" And General Mallock, pausing in the doorway, spoke with laborious effort. "Your rifles! Yes, O'Kelly, don't forget. We hold these military stores for Mr. Cartwright—and the King."

Then he bowed, and went shuffling off to his room.

"Miss Kathleen," said Cartwright; "as a favour, don't either of you go out again to-day. Stay indoors—all of you. We'll be round here in the morning."

And Mr. Cartwright and his men rode away.

Mollie at one of the windows watched them go down the drive—a brave sight, flat caps bobbing, sunlight flashing from polished steel.

"Do look at them. They're too lovely for words—even in their undress uniform."

O'Kelly had not troubled to watch them. He was looking at Kathleen, and he rubbed his nose thoughtfully, and then spoke as if he felt called upon to provide some sort of apology or philosophic comment.

"Well, miss, this is a queer kettle of fish. The Lieutenant seemed thoroughly fussed and put about, didn't he? Of course he's a very young officer."

"He's a very good officer, O'Kelly," said Mollie, at the window.

"That he is, miss—or will be, with a bit more experience."

"Now they're going four abreast," said Mollie rapturously. "Jog—jog—jog. They're turning through

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the gate. How pretty. . . . Oh!" And she gave a little scream.

There was the sound of a distant shout, and O'Kelly ran out through the porch and along the drive to see what had happened.

"What is it, Mollie?" And Kathleen hurried to the window.

"Some men sprang up from behind the bank and threw stones at them. . . . They're gone. . . . Oh," cried Mollie indignantly, and excitedly, "what infamous wretches!" and she too went out through the porch. "O'Kelly! O'Kelly! Were the soldiers hurt?"

Kathleen followed her; but already O'Kelly was returning.

"'Tis all roight, miss. No damage done. They ran like deer when the troopers wheeled about at 'em."

"Will he catch them?" asked Mollie.

"He hasn't tried. They're beneath his notice. On'y five of 'em!"

"Who are they?"

"Quarry louts."

"I could never have believed in such effrontery," said Mollie, with great indignation.

"Yes," said O'Kelly; and once more he rubbed his nose reflectively. "Beneath the Lieutenant's notice. . . . But, miss, *this* is worth taking notice of. The Lieutenant thought he was unobserved. But them five must have been spying on him all the while."

Just then there came the sound of a man's voice shouting close to the house, and O'Kelly again went out.

It was Doctor Bryant, hot, breathless, running up the meadow path.

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"Stop the soldiers," he shouted. "Call after them. Stop them if you possibly can."

O'Kelly obeying without questions raised a fine bellow, and Bryant joined in holloaing with all the breath he had left. Together they went as far as the gate, and did their final shouting there—but without avail. The Hussars were now out of hearing, and soon they were out of sight.

XXVII

PRESENTLY Bryant came into the hall, and while mopping his forehead and recovering his breath, explained the causes of his excitement.

He had left his phaeton on the road near Haggetts, sending it home from there as he intended to walk up through the fields and over the down. On the high ground he had caught sight of the soldiers, and had run on as fast as he could in order to tell them something.

"I'd like to have spoken to them. Where are they going now?"

"Back to Bevistown."

"Well, I wish they hadn't been in such a tearing hurry."

"They are wanted at Bevistown," said Mollie with dignity.

"I think they are wanted at Haggetts. When I came through the village a number of men were mustering there—and all the cottages seemed deserted."

"A demonstration at Haggetts," said Kathleen. "That's very strange."

"Yes, I think it strange;" and it was obvious that Bryant felt anxious and uneasy. "There's something

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up. Frankly, I didn't like the look of the crowd. They weren't talking—they were just ranked like a regiment, don't you know, waiting for orders. . . . I think I'll cut down through the woods and tell Lord Keighley.

"Yes," said Kathleen, "perhaps it would be as well."

"You know, there was an awful row at Bevistown last night."

"Yes, we've heard about it."

"The men seem to have behaved with incredible violence and recklessness. The soldiers had their work cut out to—"

"Mr. Cartwright," said Mollie with dignity, "has given us full particulars."

Something of Dr. Bryant's anxious doubts suddenly communicated itself to Kathleen.

"Yes," she repeated, "do go down to Redchurch. But you don't think that they intend any insolence at Lord Keighley's home?"

"I don't know what to think—Listen!"

The sound of horses again—but behind the house this time:

"Some of the Hussars returning," said O'Kelly. "Coming by the sunk lane."

"Thank goodness," said Dr. Bryant. "Now I don't mind admitting—But I say, there can't be many of them."

The sound of the horses' hoofs echoed from the stone wall by the stables; then it struck more plainly on the gravel.

"Two of 'em," said O'Kelly in the porch. "No civilians! There now. . . . 'Tis his lordship himself."

Keighley, dismounting and giving his horse to his groom, asked loud and eager questions.

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" Gilchrist ! Have you seen him ? Is Gilchrist here ? "

" No, my lord."

But Keighley seemed unable or unwilling to believe what Kathleen as well as O'Kelly told him. He was violently excited, angry, red, and warm ; with quick movements and flurried words—altogether a Keighley that none of them had seen before.

" Are you sure he isn't here ? Go and look. Ask the other servants if they've seen him. Look for him everywhere. I must find him. He came this way—and I thought in all probability he'd seek shelter here."

" Shelter ! " said Bryant. " But wha—what for ? "

" The men are *hunting* him ; " and Keighley glared and stamped his foot, as if almost bursting with indignation. " The murderous savages have been after him for three hours. They are out in all directions."

" No ? " And Bryant stared at Keighley blankly.

" Someone gave him a word of warning—warned him that if he didn't want to be lynched, he must fly for his life.—He had just time to escape before they got to his house. . . . McGaher was leading them."

" Oh, why," said Mollie piteously, " why did the soldiers go back ? "

" The poor fellow must be hiding somewhere. If he isn't here, where can he have gone ? " Then Keighley had an inspiration. " Donaldson ! Gilchrist may have tried to reach Donaldson ; " and he turned to Bryant eagerly. " Would Donaldson help us ? "

" Yes, if he could. But—"

" Do you really believe in his influence ? "

" Yes, but—"

" I'll go and appeal to him to control these brutes."

" It's no use. He isn't there. He has gone away."

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"Gone away?"

"Yes, I saw his wife this morning. Donaldson had been summoned to Leeds."

"Oh!" Keighley looked at Bryant quite as blankly as Bryant had looked at him. "Very well. Then I must do without his assistance."

"It was a mysterious sort of telegram—and his wife suspected something wrong with it. It's plain enough now. Oh, I see the meaning of it *now*. It was trick of the men."

"A trick?"

"To get him out of the way—so that they could have a clear field for this devil's game."

"Oh, why," said Mollie again, "why didn't the soldiers stay?"

Mollie's voice was tremulous, and her face had become white—indeed all the faces had grown pale. The flurry and excitement had vanished from Keighley's manner, and with the fading redness the aspect of indignant wrath had also disappeared; he spoke now very deliberately, as if feeling that all his words were of importance and that it was necessary to choose them with the utmost care. The words supplied themselves slowly, but when there he uttered them in a quietly determined tone. Dr. Bryant was grave and hesitating—as if in attendance on a serious case that had taken a totally inexplicable turn for the worse.

O'Kelly came back, and reported that there was no sign of Mr. Gilchrist. None of the servants had seen him.

"Very good," said Keighley. "Wait. I may require you."

"Yes, my lord."

An hour ago the house seemed to be dozing in the

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pleasant afternoon warmth. Now it was just as silent, and yet it seemed as if the very thought of sleep had been banished from it for ever. A fellow creature in danger : a human being, threatened with deadly peril from the cruelty of his kind—how best and most completely might one aid him ? The air seemed full of a throbbing intensity of doubt and interrogation ; one had a sense of something shapeless and tremendous drawing nearer and nearer, together with a conviction that during the silence of this anticipatory pause numberless intricate problems ought to be solved and that in fact one was doing nothing.

And the surrounding silence deepened to a quite abnormal degree. The ticking of the big clock on the stairs thumped with preposterous loudness ; the light curtains flapped like the sails of a ship ; the flutter of leaves among the shrubs on the other side of the gravel drive sounded as distinctly as the snorting and pawing of the two horses close outside the door.

But the pause was of such slight duration—really only for as long as everybody stood looking at Lord Keighley and waiting to hear what he would say next.

"Not here." That was what he said. "Then where is he? . . . I must think."

General Mallock came shuffling into the hall, and nobody took the faintest notice of him. He was carrying two or three sheets of manuscript and a pen ; he stared listlessly at the fresh visitors, and seeming well satisfied that there was no need to speak to them since they did not speak to him, he quietly seated himself at the table and stooped over his papers. He seemed a strangely incongruous figure—so calm and unconcerned ; so near but so remote, because so completely shut out of the agitating thoughts all round him.

"Dr. Bryant," whispered Kathleen. "Surely it's

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impossible. Even if they catch Mr. Gilchrist, surely he won't be in danger of—of his life?"

"Yes—I fear he will."

"But they must know what the consequences would be."

Bryant opened his hands, and answered very nervously.

"Desperate men, when their blood is up, don't count the consequences."

"Oh, but it's horrible—it's too terrible."

"Miss Kathleen," said Keighley stolidly, "talking won't help matters. Action! Action! I must act promptly—very promptly."

"Yes, but how?"

"Let me think. Let us think quietly—but swiftly."

Every moment he was becoming slower, more stolid, more authoritative. He plunged his hands in his pockets, stood firm and big and strong, seeming to feel at once the difficulties of the occasion and an increasing determination to surmount them, however great. And there was something comforting to others in the way he had assumed absolute authority. Kathleen, Mollie, and Bryant watched him anxiously, waiting to hear what he intended to do.

"Yes," he said. "I'll ride out and show myself—up and down the high road. I'll go one way—and my groom shall go the other." Then he called to his groom. "Wills! Are you there, Wills? O'Kelly, hold the horses while I speak to Wills. . . . Yes, that's it," and he continued slowly but very confidently. "If I can once come up with Gilchrist—Yes, they'll not dare to touch him when I am by his side. . . . And now if you, Dr. Bryant, will be good enough to——"

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"Why," said Bryant, "don't you send your groom to Bevistown to fetch the soldiers?"

"Yes," said Mollie shakily. "Do that."

"Hush, please. I can't think, if you all talk. But yes—on the whole, perhaps—Yes, I'll do that. . . . If you please." Lord Keighley had gone to the table, and he took the pen out of General Mallock's hand. "Thank you;" and he sat down. "Now where's the ink? Paper. Envelope!"

The unceremonious theft of his pen seemed to bewilder General Mallock. Picking up his manuscript, he left the table, took a chair by the fireplace, and looked round as if utterly confused by a conversation of which he failed to understand one word. Apparently giving up the enigma as a bad job, ceasing to listen, ceasing to hear, he took off his spectacles, breathed on the lenses, and began to polish them with his handkerchief.

"Wills," said Keighley over his shoulder to the groom. "Are you there?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You shall ride my horse. Change the leathers."

"Yes, my lord."

"You are to deliver this note—when I have written it—to Major Grinling—or his representative."

"Yes, my lord."

Keighley was writing very slowly, and reciting each word aloud. Bryant stood at his elbow; Kathleen and Mollie, on the other side of the table, watched his face.

"To the Officer in command at Bevistown. Immediate!"

"Put 'Urgent,'" said Dr. Bryant.

"Immediate and Urgent. . . . Rioters assembled

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threatening life of my manager. Please send some troops."

"I should say, 'Send all available troops.'"

"Do you think so? . . . 'All available troops through Haggetts to'—"Keighley paused. "Where shall I say?"

"Over Redchurch Down to the Long Moor Road."

"Then I must cross out the 'to' . . . 'Through Haggetts, over Redchurch Down to the Long Moor Road. Keighley.' . . . That's it! . . . Blotting paper . . . Thank you;" and Keighley folded the note and put it in the envelope. "Wills!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Here you are."

Keighley stood up with the note in his hand, and the groom was about to take it, when one of the Mallocks' gardeners noisily burst into the hall.

"Sir, sir," gasped the gardener. "Miss Kathleen! Sir! There's oondreds of men all about the place."

"What do you say?" asked Keighley. "Where are the men?"

"*Everywhere!* Lyin' in the meadows—behind all the banks."

"That's a fact, my lord," said O'Kelly.

Richards the coachman had relieved him of the charge of the horses, and confirmed the gardener's report.

"Oh," said Keighley. "Very good."

"They're on the open road too."

Keighley tapped the note with his fingers, as if deliberating, and then handed it to the groom.

"But," said Bryant, "will they let him pass?"

"Of course they will."

"I doubt it."

"Here, O'Kelly," said Keighley authoritatively.

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"Send the other horse to the stables and put him in a stall, on the pillar reins. . . . And *you*! You show Wills the way through the grounds to the road."

"Don't attempt the road," said Bryant.

Keighley waved his hand, to impose silence.

"If you please, Dr. Bryant—"

"Yes, but," said Bryant eagerly, "his best chance will be through the stable yard, and round the back of the house."

"And along the sunk lane," said Kathleen.

"Yes, my lad," said O'Kelly, giving the groom a slap on the back, and speaking cheerily, "but lead your horse—so as they won't see you. Don't mount him till ye're just about to lose the cover of the lane. Then op wid ye!"

"And gallop fast," added Bryant.

"Yes, gallop for all ye're worth."

The two horses were led away from the front door with the note-bearer, under escort of O'Kelly, the coachman, the gardener; and Bryant, Kathleen, and Mollie stood in the porch and watched them until they turned the corner of the house.

Keighley, stern and frowning, walked up and down the hall with his hands in his pockets; and presently noticing General Mallock, looked at him thoughtfully.

"Well, General, what do *you* think of this?"

General Mallock did not hear the question. Giving the spectacles a final wipe, he slowly adjusted them on his nose and sat blinking.

"Bryant," said Keighley. "Come here, please. . . . That is something done, eh?" And he looked hard at Bryant, and spoke very firmly. "Now I mean to go out and show myself, and you might come with me."

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"Yes," said Bryant stoutly. "I'll come with you."

"But the young ladies?" and Keighley looked round to the porch, and then, with his hand on Bryant's shoulder, indicated the General. "How can we leave them with no better protector than *that*?"

"No. One of us must stay with them."

"Yes, *you* must stay here, Bryant."

Then the baize door swung open and the footman rushed in, followed by the other gardener.

"Miss Kathleen, Miss Kathleen," called the footman. "Elsworth wants to speak to you."

Kathleen and Mollie came from the porch, and heard the gardener giving new information to Lord Keighley.

"There's men—with guns—beyond the lawn. I came on 'em crouching in the laurels. They fairly scared me."

"It's all right," said Keighley. "They won't hurt you."

"Beyond the lawn," repeated the gardener, "but inside our fence—trespassing—with guns."

"They won't hurt anyone here. Don't be afraid."

"But what do they want with us? Why have they come here?"

"We don't know," said Keighley. "We are going to find out. Now keep quiet—everybody—please."

But his lordship's request or command was immediately disregarded.

A maid-servant rushed along the gallery, and called frantically from the top of the stairs.

"It's the men. It's the men, coming over the moor—as far as you can see. An army of them. Oh, oh, oh;" and sobbing in terror, she ran down the stairs.

"Hush," said Keighley, "don't make that noise."

Waves of fear were sweeping through the house; doors opened and shut; a panic-stricken whisper passed

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swiftly among the women-servants. "It's the *men*—the *men*. The *men* have come with guns to kill us." Soon nearly all the servants had clustered together by the baize door, and were peering into the hall.

"Close that door," said Keighley, "and keep quiet. If you are wanted, I'll send for you."

Frederick took the scared gardener with him, and the baize door was reluctantly closed. Only the sobbing maid remained, and Kathleen and Mollie were endeavouring to quiet her.

"Sh, sh," said Keighley. "How silly you are! Don't be such a silly girl. . . . There. Miss Kathleen, send her out to the others;" and the hysterical girl was dispatched through the baize door. "Now we mustn't lose our heads—*any* of us;" and he looked from one to another.

The faces were very pale. Mollie's lips were twitching and she clung to her sister's arm. Bryant was preternaturally grave, but quite firm. Kathleen's forehead was puckered, the eyebrows drawn together till they formed a single line.

"Miss Kathleen, there can be no real cause for fear—I mean, there can be no danger to anyone in this house. If that poor fellow were here, it might be different. No doubt they have come to look for him—Then they will go away. So please don't be afraid."

"I am not in the least afraid," said Kathleen proudly.
"That is, for myself."

It was all very well for Lord Keighley to say that the men would go away when they had failed to discover their victim; but the horror of Gilchrist's impending fate would remain. Nothing had really been done to avert it; and it was this sense of tragic doom hovering all round them, dimming the sunlight, turning

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the warm air cold, that drew the blood from one's heart and made one's head feel as if iron bands were crushing it.

"Good," said Keighley, looking first at one and then at another. "As soon as they have cleared off, I shall take steps—yes, I shall see what can be attempted."

No one thought of looking at General Mallock; even Kathleen had forgotten him; but now his voice interposed for the first time.

"What is it? I can't understand. What are you discussing?"

For the last few minutes he had been listening intently. He sat bolt upright in his chair by the fireplace; his eyes had become bright and they glittered behind the spectacles, but his voice had a far-off tone—as if it had been a voice coming to them from some remote distance.

"It's all right, General," said Keighley. "Don't worry yourself. We are all right."

"Are you?" General Mallock put his hand to his forehead. "I seem to remember hearing that before. All right?" He dropped his hand, settled himself again in the old stooping attitude, and the brightness left his eyes.

The western sunlight was losing its power; looking through the porch, one saw how far the lengthened shadows had crept across the gravel. The hall was full of shadow, and familiar objects seemed one by one to fade, to change.

A shadow moved across the entrance, and a foot-step sounded.

It was O'Kelly. He came in quietly, stood rubbing his nose, and then spoke to Lord Keighley.

"That lad will never have got through them."

"Oh!"

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"There's sentries at ivry point of their circle, and pickuts posted in ivry avenue of escape. The place is systematically surrounded."

"Surrounded! . . . Surrounded!" Everybody echoed the word.

And then there came what seemed an echo of the echo—faint and uncertain, from a great distance.

"*Surrounded!*" It was General Mallock, whispering the word.

"Very good," said Keighley, with increased stolidness. "You can wait here. I shall have some orders to give you in a minute."

General Mallock had put his hand to his head again, and slowly and shakily he rose from his chair.

"But tell me—explain it. I don't understand. All this seems to have happened once before. It's like a dream—an extraordinary dream."

"General," said Keighley authoritatively, "do let us have silence, please. If you talk, how can one think?" . . .

General Mallock leaned his hand on the back of his chair, as if for support. The hand was trembling. He seemed to feel a sudden and intense agitation; he stared at all the familiar home objects, and for a few moments at least did not recognize them. The walls had receded; there was wider space, more light, more air. He stared upward. There was no roof above his head. . . . Then the illusion had gone. He knew that he was in his own house, here in England, listening to English voices. He sat down again, trembling and muttering.

"Miss Kathleen," Keighley was saying, "it would be better for you and your sister to go upstairs. . . . Now, Bryant, let us think what exactly should be the line we ought to adopt."

"If they have cut off all communication——"

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"Yes, I know. But nevertheless——" Keighley paused, and stared at Bryant.

"Yes?"

"Well, I think our next move will be to—to——"

"I think," said O'Kelly, very dryly, "that the next move will come from the other side."

"Look," said Bryant, pointing at the farthest window. "Look," and he dropped his voice to a whisper. "McGaher!"

Four men had passed the window and were standing outside the porch.

Kathleen and Mollie were on the stairs; O'Kelly had placed himself side by side with Bryant at the foot of the stairs; Keighley was in the middle of the room; and all were looking at the open doorway.

For a few moments the dead silence lasted. One could hear the air stirring the light branches of the shrubs as plainly as one could hear one's heart beating; the clock ticked louder and louder; and in every moment that curious idea of unreality which invades the minds of most people during times of crisis grew deeper, stronger, more difficult to resist.

Two of the men had entered the porch.

They were covered with dust; and, standing in the shadow on the threshold, they looked grey and haggard, unnaturally large—but not solid or real, quite dim and ghostlike.

Then they advanced a few steps, seeming to take substance as they came through the doorway.

"General," said the foremost man very quietly, "may I make so bold?"

"Well," said Keighley sternly. "What is it?"

"Only a question," said the leader, looking across the room at General Mallock.

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"And the demand for a plain answer," added the other man.

"Will you kindly tell us, Is Gilchrist concealed here?"

"Not to my knowledge," said the General. "Gilchrist? No. I am General Mallock."

"Yes, we know you, your honour. We've no quarrel with you."

"Address me, please," said Keighley. "What if he is here?"

"Well, we'd like a few words with him."

"Then you can't have them. He is a servant. I am the master. Speak to me."

"No," said the leader, "we'd rather speak to him. It's *him* we want." He had begun very quietly, but he went on with an ascending note of violence. "You see, too often he's refused to meet us. We must do as he says—no arbitration, no discussing our plea. . . . We are not men—we are dogs, to slink off at the crack of his whip. If one of us barks, he is to shoot him. Well, now he has got to meet us, once for all, face to face—to hear our views."

"Yes," said the other man, looking round the room and speaking with grim emphasis, "and it will be better for all parties if you'll produce him easily and quickly."

Then there was a longer pause. Both of the men had turned to Lord Keighley, and were waiting for his answer. General Mallock was leaning forward, gazing at the leader, and murmuring to himself.

"He used threats. Yes, he threatened. . . . But this happened a long time ago—not *now*?"

"Very good," said Keighley, making up his mind, "I don't know why I should trouble to tell you; but for the sake of my friends here, I will. Mr. Gilchrist,

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having got wind of your plans, has put himself in security out of your reach."

" Could one ask where that might be ? "

" He is under the protection of the soldiers—at Bevistown."

" Save yourself the trouble of lying, my lord. He is here—and we know it."

" And we mean to have him," said the second man.

" You see," said the leader quietly, and with a sneering grin, " the boys outside there are by nature most polite young gentlemen, and their good breeding is such, they'd wish to avoid harming the hairs on anybody's head, but—"

" McGaher," said the other man fiercely, " don't palaver. Speak straight."

" I will. Now my lying lord, ye can take it straight ; " and the leader's voice rose into loud ferocity. " If you attempt to shield the traitor and would-be murtherer, it'll be bad for you—very bad for all of you. My boys will knock the place about your ears, they'll burn you out like wasps in a nest ; they'll shed innocent blood like water to get at the blood of the guilty. . . . Now, not for your sake, but the old General's sake—we allow you law." He had pulled out a watch, and was looking at it. " Thirty minutes," and he pointed to the clock on the stairs. " Thirty minutes by that clock—to give up our enemy. Or we'll come and *take* him."

Then McGaher and the second man went out, and with the other two were seen passing the window.

General Mallock had sprung up from his chair. He was pressing both hands to his forehead, and he spoke as if to himself, in a low intense whisper.

" *Andalkund!* Andalkund—over again. . . . The

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same thing. Our post surrounded. The rebel chief calls on us to surrender!"

He sank back into his chair, trembling, muttering, gasping.

XXVIII

BRYANT and O'Kelly moved cautiously from the staircase towards the porch.

"Close the door," said Keighley—"and bolt it."

"There's a bar, isn't there?" asked Bryant. "Put up the bar."

O'Kelly closed and locked the outer door of the porch, drew the bolts, and put the bar across. Mollie had gone upstairs. And now Kathleen hurried up after her, and looked out of one of the small windows in the gallery. Keighley still stood in the middle of the hall with his hands in his pockets.

"Miss Kathleen," he called, "can you see any of them?"

"Yes. They're just beyond the lawn."

"Are there many of them?"

"Yes, a great many."

Bryant came back from the porch and looked at the clock.

"A minute and a half gone."

Keighley started, and turned round.

"Bryant, this is devilish awkward. What's to be done?"

"They won't believe your word."

"No—and that puts us in as bad a fix as if we really were hiding him."

"If these blackguards swarm upon us, ransacking the house, turning it upside down—"

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Keighley glanced up at Kathleen and Mollie.

" Bryant, if it comes to force, they'll overpower us in a moment."

" Impossible to resist them."

Then they both looked at the clock.

" Two and a half minutes gone," said Bryant.

Neither of them showed any unworthy signs of fear, but both were showing every possible sign of flustered helplessness.

" Let us think what we *can* do ; " and Keighley fingered his mouth, as if striving to drag out some rapid invention. " Yes—half an hour ! I shall think of something directly."

" Three minutes of it gone already," Bryant reminded him.

General Mallock, unnoticed, sunk deep in his chair by the fireplace, continued to mutter and gasp.

" For the second time—the second time. All this happened years ago."

Since he began to listen, the situation had been steadily developing ; until now, as if obeying or following the dominant idea of his mind, a state of affairs precisely analogous to that of Andalkund had created itself on a small scale to fit the narrow limits of his material environment. Step by step, all the essential conditions that he had described as existing at the mountain town in India were produced for him here. Here, as there, a small force lay surrounded by swarms of rebels. Here, as there, the occupants of the place had been called upon to yield.

He was like a person struggling in a dream, subconsciously aware that it is a dream, but impotent to shake off the dream thraldom, watching the progress of events, seeming to know what must infallibly happen next, feeling that all is real and yet knowing that all is unreal.

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Now, what is to happen next? A noise had come from the servants' offices. General Mallock turned his head to listen.

Once more the baize door was burst open. Four or five of the men-servants thrust themselves into the room, dragging a man with them.

"Here he is, my lord."

"We've found him," said the coachman. "He was hiding in the stable loft."

"We've got him," said one of the grooms. "He had crept in under the straw, but I spotted his boots sticking out."

He was hatless, covered with dust and dirt, livid, shaking, panting—dreadful to see, in a terror so great that it seemed to rob him of all manlike attributes. He writhed and twisted, slipped from his captors, ran crouchingly, and clung to Lord Keighley's legs and looked up at him with blood-shot, distended eyes—truly not a man any longer, the hunted animal in its extremity of peril.

"Gilchrist!"

"My lord—save me—save me from them. For Heaven's sake, hide me—hide me somewhere," and he crouched lower and clung more desperately.

"Yes, yes—I'll do my best. Pull yourself together. I'll stand by you. . . . Now, get up."

Gilchrist wildly beat the floor with his hands, and twisted round to Bryant.

"Doctor, help—help." Then he staggered to his feet, and frantically turned from one to another. "Oh, if you have hearts in your bosoms, save me. They'll tear me limb from limb. They'll torture me before they kill me. . . . Hide me. Don't let them get at me." Then he saw the General in his distant chair, ran to him, and knelt again. "Sir, have pity. For the love of

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mercy, don't give me up to them. Don't give me up."

General Mallock rose slowly, pushed back the chair, and spoke with sudden strength and decision.

"Give you up? No—you are safe here. No surrender. You'll never see the white flag flying above this post."

"General," said Keighley, "this is entirely my affair. I'll not bring my troubles on you.... Gilchrist, get up. Don't grovel there.... Bryant, I say.... O'Kelly. I say—O'Kelly.... Isn't there some means of disguising him? If we could change his clothes! Then he and I——"

But no one noticed Lord Keighley now. Everyone was attending to the master of the house, who was giving orders to right and left.

"Send the maids upstairs, all of them."

"Yes, sir."

"Call them through."

"Yes, sir."

General Mallock had come to life: as if by a miracle, the years fell from his broad shoulders; he carried his head high; his voice sounded clear and vigorous. An hour ago he was a feeble old man, a fretful dotard shuffling his slippers and blinking owlishly. Now he was erect, alert, determined—a soldier issuing words of command.

"O'Kelly, get all our people inside the walls."

"Yes, sir."

"Every man to assemble here. All the women-servants to the upper floor.... Dick, and you, Elsworth, to the doors. Shutter and bar the windows. Doors must be barricaded."

"Yes, sir.... Yes, sir." The servants were obeying him. O'Kelly had gone swiftly to obey. The

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maids came hurrying through the hall to the staircase.

"Kathleen."

"Yes, father."

Kathleen had come half way down the stairs, and was watching him. Her face flushed, her eyes glowed, she drew long, deep breaths.

"I put the women in your charge."

"Yes, father."

"General," said Keighley, "keep calm, and please don't interfere. I intend to get my servant out of this, without risk to anyone but him and me."

"Your servant is safe. *I* answer for his safety. Kathleen!"

"Yes, father."

"I want the mattresses from all the beds. Pull them off and throw them down to us. Mattresses across windows, and furniture behind. . . . Frederick, my pistols and all weapons from the cupboard. My sword—bring me my sword."

Keighley spoke again, but no one listened to him. There was a confused murmur of voices as the servants ran hither and thither obeying the General's orders. One could hear all round the house a sound of bolts and bars, as the iron shutters were put into position; then there came the flopping thud of the mattresses, as the maids dropped them from the gallery to the floor of the hall.

"We are all in, sir"—O'Kelly had returned with his report—"and the windows and doors are fastened."

"Good. I'll go my rounds directly. . . . First, bring up our magazine rifles, and all the ammunition."

"General," cried Keighley, "what in the name of reason do you mean?"

Bryant seized Keighley's arm, and whispered in his ear.

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"It's hallucination. Look at him. This is madness—raving madness."

Frederick had fetched the old leather sword-case and put it on the hall table, together with a couple of revolvers and some Afghan knives. Now General Mallock had taken out the sword and was buckling its belt round his waist. While he did so, he continued to give orders in a rapid peremptory tone.

"More mattresses. Buckets of water. Fill buckets with water. I want as many buckets of water—Guard against flames. Where flames show, fling your water, and cover with blankets. Guard against fire, up there—"

General Mallock had crossed the border line and become a maniac—of this Bryant had not a doubt. An access of violent excitement had swept him from the perception of facts into the world of hallucinatory imaginations. Yet he had obtained absolute control—no one now could restrain him.

"Gates, and all of you—get to work at your barricades. Every window to be blocked—first a mattress, then a piece of heavy furniture. Pile them up—my bureau, the bookcase—piano—everything. Quick and quiet. Avoid noise. Noise will alarm the enemy."

Bryant, looking round, started and again whispered to Keighley. O'Kelly and a groom were bringing in the rifles and the boxes of ammunition. Then this at least was not a hallucination. The General in fact possessed real weapons!

"O'Kelly, how goes the truce? What time have we left?"

"Twenty minutes, sir."

"More than enough."

"Yes, sir."

Bryant looked at the clock. In three minutes Lord

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Keighley had done nothing. Was it possible that General Mallock had been at work for only seven minutes? But madmen act with fatal quickness.

"Steady now, and quiet. Strengthen these barricades"—The servants were busy blocking the hall windows. "Open this shutter—one flap open here, for a peep-hole. I must have my peep-hole."

It was a terrible situation—as understood by the doctor, in all its possibilities. Mad or not, General Mallock was the supreme power now, and no one could gainsay his will. He was a soldier, and all the others except O'Kelly were civilians. Mad or not, he was their only leader; and he was showing that he knew how to lead. Whatever mad orders he might give, he would enforce obedience.

These oafish, stupid, timid servants seemed to take inspiration and courage from his sharp authoritative voice. Bryant could hear them speaking among themselves quietly and confidently, cheerily and almost jovially. Their leader had put new heart into them.

"There, my lads, we have arms—and we know how to use them. Ammunition in plenty! But we'll strengthen the barricades. This floor stands the brunt of the siege. . . . We'll pepper them from above. . . . Sergeant, parade our garrison," and he pointed to the hall table. "By the right of the table—all effectives shoulder to shoulder. Every effective to the assembly."

Keighley was vainly trying to obtain attention, and Bryant whispered advice.

"You must humour him. Unless you humour him, he won't listen to a word you say."

"General," said Keighley, "pray be reasonable. We are in a desperately tight place, but—"

"I am commander of this post."

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"Yes, we are not denying your authority, only we urge you——"

General Mallock turned away.

"Sergeant O'Kelly, parade them, parade them." Then he turned round again to Keighley. "These men are serving under my command. And you, my lord, may serve too—but to serve, you must obey. . . . Kathleen, Mollie, keep upstairs. . . . Dr. Bryant, you may stay as a non-combatant and succour the wounded. But your place is out of the firing line. Stand back, please."

Bryant drew back in obedience to the General's imperious gesture, and murmured to himself.

"Acute mania—nothing else. . . ."

O'Kelly had gradually ranked his fellow-servants shoulder to shoulder as directed, and now he stood facing them, like a non-commissioned officer waiting for the inspection to begin.

Richards was nearest the table; next to him stood young Frederick; then came the gardeners, and then the others, till the end of the line was reached with Curtis the third groom. These formed in its entire strength the little regiment of toy soldiers with which General Mallock used to play at shooting on his miniature range, until he was forbidden thus harmlessly to amuse himself. Every toy soldier in the line was looking at him now with mute and respectful inquiry, waiting for his commands.

"Sergeant, how many?"

"Nine, sir."

"Nine rifles—and one for you. That's two rifles in reserve to load and hand."

Keighley plucked him by the sleeve of his coat, and spoke to him with solemn energy.

"General, I warn you. You don't know what you are

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doing. You—you are bringing death upon us. Think, just think of your daughters and the women-servants!"

General Mallock swung round on his heels, and looked at Keighley with glittering eyes.

"The women and children! No, don't think of them. It's the women and children who never forgive you. It's in *their* faces that you'll read your condemnation to your dying day. Take that from me.—It's the lesson that men learn too late."

Then he turned his back on Lord Keighley, and began to deliver a rousing speech to the garrison.

"My boys, the concentrated eyes of the world are upon us. We are put to the test. Are we men—or dogs, to slink off at the crack of a whip? Shall we fight it out or hide in holes? If we win, the world will honour us. If we lose our lives—well, life without honour isn't worth living. I have tried it for fifteen years; and I swear to you, by God's Cross, you'd better be dead. Say we give up this man, and save our skins? We are branded as cowards—cowards; so that children and wives are ashamed to own us. Only pity is left in their hearts for us. . . . Very well then—shall we give him up? Stay—I'll ask the women first;" and he looked up to the landing. "Kathleen, shall we give him up?"

"No, father."

"Mollie, shall we fight?"

"Yes, father."

"That's what the women and children say. Now, you men, will you fight?"

The answer came in a loud chorus. "Yes, yes, yes"—the whole garrison seemed to be set on fire with enthusiasm.

"Very well. I won't betray you. No surrender. . . . But we'll make sure that you all mean what you

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say. I'll have no faint-hearts or half-hearts in this post. . . . To the bitter end, boys?" And he went rapidly from man to man, putting his question to each. "If you don't mean it, go. . . . Do you mean it? . . . Do you mean it?"

"Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Yes, we do." Evidently every man of the garrison meant it—except one. But at the end of the line, nearest to the door, General Mallock discovered doubt and hesitation.

"Ah! What's this? You quail. You are quailing."

It was Curtis, the groom, who had answered feebly and evasively.

"A big job you're putting on us, sir."

"He's afraid," said O'Kelly. "More shame to um."

"His heart, if he has one," said somebody else, "is all against us, sir."

"Sir," said Richards, "you'd better have given him the sack when I advised it. He belongs to them more than to us."

"No, I don't," said Curtis. "But, sir—such a lot of 'em—and so few of us."

General Mallock spoke with terrible sternness.

"Turn him out. He must be put outside the walls. Yes, he shall be sent over to the enemy. But hold him now—hold him till we are ready. Then we'll use him as our envoy to the Rebel Chief. . . . Now, Sergeant, serve out the arms. The ammunition."

The regiment, breaking rank, clustered round O'Kelly and received the rifles. The cartridge boxes were opened. Gilchrist approached the table, furtively took one of the revolvers, and disappeared through the morning-room doorway. Dr. Bryant was whispering to Keighley, who stood at the foot of the stairs, frowning and biting his finger nails.

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"To the fortifications. Strengthen them. Strengthen them wherever possible. . . . Ammunition up there. All reserves up there. . . . Sergeant O'Kelly, how goes the truce? What time have we left?"

"Eleven minutes, sir."

"It is more than I require. I shall be ready for action in three minutes. I shall probably shorten the truce myself. . . . Now I will go my rounds."

He was passing swiftly from room to room, and one could hear his voice, loud and clear.

"Yes, secure. . . . Secure here. But guard this door. No. *I* answer for that door. . . . Stand aside, Saunders, your place is here. More chairs and tables. Strengthen your fortifications. . . . Every bucket to the upper floor."

Then he reappeared in the hall and began to dispose of his troops.

"To your stations! To your stations. . . . Four for the gallery. Gates, my lad—and you—you—and you. Up to your stations. . . . Two for that window. Two for the corridor. . . . You to the end window."

The servants shouldered their rifles and hastened to obey. Five of them had taken positions at the upstairs windows when he spoke again.

"Keep well behind your breastwork—let no one expose himself needlessly. . . . Kathleen, spare arms will be in your charge. You women can load and hand. Tear up linen strips.—Be watchful for the wounded. . . . Women carry buckets too. Women for the flames! . . ."

All the servants were in position now, except O'Kelly and Frederick, who stood near the barricaded entrance, guarding the disloyal groom.

"Very well." General Mallock had gone to the

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table, and, as he looked round, there was a smile of satisfaction on his lips. "Where is my messenger?"

"Here he is, sir."

"Now you—go back to this insolent rascal who dares to——"

Keighley interrupted him.

"General, for the last time I must implore you."

"Silence there," said General Mallock sternly. "Silence."

"At least hear a suggestion. Don't wilfully hasten the catastrophe. Try a last chance. Let your messenger summon McGaher to a final interview—or parley—or whatever you call it. Perhaps, when McGaher sees our preparations—what we intend—he may——"

General Mallock spoke still more sternly.

"Lord Keighley, you had better go too. If you can't obey, you are useless and dangerous in this post."

Kathleen was looking down at them from the gallery, and Keighley heard her call to him in a low firm voice.

"Lord Keighley. Do what he tells you, and don't talk."

Keighley shrugged his shoulders, and moved towards the table.

"O'Kelly, give me a rifle."

"And give me one too," said Dr. Bryant.

O'Kelly turned to the General inquiringly.

"Shall I, sir?"

General Mallock hesitated a moment. "Yes. We'll trust them both. . . . Now you——"

Given one of the two spare rifles, Keighley went slowly upstairs and took a position at a window. Bryant followed him with the other rifle.

"Sir," said Curtis, with real or feigned enthusiasm,

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"I've made up my mind. I'll stay with you and fight it out."

General Mallock laughed harshly.

"No. No, thank you . . . Now, word for word, to the leader of this rabble—General Mallock's defiance and contempt. . . ."

"Then put it in writing, sir. It's more than my life's worth to give them such a message by word of mouth."

"Very well. Yes, that's more formal. I prefer to write it. Pen. Paper." And he sat at the table.

"Sergeant! How many minutes?"

"About four and a half, sir."

"Ample. . . . Sergeant, be ready with the door. . . . Very quiet. . . . Beware of a surprise." And he rapidly wrote his message.

"Now—you may all listen. . . . You and your insolent rebels are herewith ordered to retire. If you dare to advance so much as one yard, it will be taken as an act of war, and the punishment that I shall inflict will be swift and drastic." He paused, and repeated the last word with evident relish. "Drastic! . . . Signed, George Mallock." Then he folded the paper and handed it to the groom. "Go."

O'Kelly and Frederick had pulled aside the furniture and opened the inner door. Now they cautiously unfastened the door of the porch. In another moment the messenger had been thrust outside the fortress walls; bolts and bars were being reinstated, and the obstacles put back before the inner door.

"Quick as life now, Sergeant. Take your place up there, and give me your reports."

O'Kelly, rifle in hand, scuttled up the stairs and took his position at the small window in the gallery just above the front door. Meanwhile General Mallock

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had pushed the table across to the barricade of the window where one shutter had been purposely left open. Agilely as a boomerang he leaped upon the table, and stood looking out of his window.

"Sergeant, are you there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you hear me distinctly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good—and now listen! Now keep me informed."

There was a silence that to some of those watching and waiting seemed incredibly long. Then there came the sounds of tumultuous shouting.

"The message has been delivered, sir."

"Ha, ha!"

"The enemy are in rare commotion, sir."

General Mallock laughed gaily, and drew his rusting sword from its scabbard.

"Now, you all understand. Let them come right on. Hold your fire until I give the word of command. Pick your men, and shoot as coolly and quietly as if it was target practice."

"They're advancing, sir."

General Mallock raised his sword above his head, and peered through the peep-hole. The roar of voices drew near—nearer.

"They're coming on in hundreds."

Another servant had spoken almost simultaneously with O'Kelly.

"They're coming in thousands."

"Steady there. . . . Ready!" General Mallock lowered his sword. "Fire!"

The discharge of the dozen rifles rang out in a loud volley.

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XXIX

MORE than four hours had passed, and the moonlight pouring through the broken windows slowly pierced the smoke-laden air, mingled with the lamplight, and showed the hard-beset garrison still in possession of their fortress.

All round the walls it was as silent as the grave. A lull in the storm had come after the last burst of fury at the shattered porch. This was the longest respite there had been ; and, as it lengthened, husky voices whispered with quickly growing hope. Could it possibly be that the tempest had blown itself out ?

Leaden death that flies invisible with a whistle and sob, the smoke that may suffocate, the flames that may devour ; noisy beating of axes and the thunderous blows of beam and bar, tinkling rain of shredded glass and the dull crash of stone against stone—surely the defenders might hope now that the tumultuous many-shaped rage of attack had wavered and sunk ?

The lamps, sheltered with packing-cases, stood on the floor of the hall, and their light, shining upwards as the smoke cleared away, allowed one to measure the havoc of the four hours' siege.

Everything that would yield had yielded, everything that would break had broken ; the iron shutters hung torn and loose, from hinges wrench'd out of sockets ; the stones, bricks, and slates that had been hurled over the barricades strewed the parquetry amidst burnt-out firebrands, fragments of glass, pools of water, and empty buckets.

Up there in the gallery where the dry-tongued whisper

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passed from one to another, all the faces were white and ghostlike when the moonlight touched them. But as they turned towards the light of the lamps, one saw here and there the red chaplet of a blood-stained bandage. Several of the men-servants wore bandages on their hands as well as their heads.

Three of them crouching behind the gallery breast-work seemed too exhausted to move—one sprawling ugly looked like a dead man. The women-servants stood silent, listening—perhaps praying. And Kathleen and Mollie, sitting side by side on the stairs, gazed down into the hall. Kathleen's hair had fallen; she was dishevelled, powder-blackened, looking like a woman of the French Revolution who had lost her red cap and her drum in a street battle.

"Sir," said O'Kelly, leaning over the balustrade.
"Upon my word, I think we done 'em."

"Wait," said General Mallock.

With his unsheathed sword in his left hand, he was pacing the hall, to and fro, proudly and slowly.

Both the inner and the outer door had been battered to pieces, and one saw, through the rent iron and splintered wood, a silver patch of moonlight on the gravel drive, the dark foliage of the laurels, and a vague distance of open lawn—all so quiet out there that one might believe the garden, the moor, the whole world were sleeping in the soft embrace of the tranquil night. Yet such a little time ago there had been hand to hand fighting here at the threshold—gashing and stabbing over the smashed barrier, yelling, cursing, and moaning, until the foes drew off to take breath and come on again. The reddened blades of the Afghan knives told their story of this crisis. The knives had proved very useful while the struggle lasted in the violated porch.

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General Mallock moved to the barricade and peered out at the night.

"Wait," he repeated. "Don't be in a hurry. They may be forming to charge again."

O'Kelly answered huskily but jovially.

"There's not a charge left in 'em. They've had their bellyful of charging."

Some of the men-servants laughed hoarsely, and O'Kelly resumed his old position at the gallery window over the door.

"Wait, Sergeant."

Then, after a few moments, Lord Keighley, at another window, spoke to his commander.

"I can see them moving now."

"Wait."

O'Kelly spoke again, in breathless excitement now. "They're carrying off their wounded."

"Yes," whispered a bandaged servant, "I can see some on the road—thirty or forty crossed the road by the gate."

"Good. Nevertheless we'll wait quietly."

But then O'Kelly raised his voice to a husky bellow.

"'Tis their rear-guard. The rear-guard. 'Tis retreat—they're retreating. We've routed 'em—the louts;" and again leaning over the balustrade, he excitedly asked for orders. "Shall we give 'em a last volley behind their dhrity backs?"

"No," said General Mallock, wearily, but complacently. "Sound the Cease-fire."

"Then give 'em a shout, boys," cried O'Kelly, wild with excitement. "All together now. . . . Hurrah! . . . And again, boys. . . . Hurrah!"

All the men of the garrison lifted their tired and husky voices in cheer after cheer.

"There," said O'Kelly, rubbing his parched lips

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with the back of his blistered hand, "that'll keep 'em on the trot, now they're started."

"Easy then," said General Mallock. "But stand to your arms."

Mr. Gilchrist, who had disappeared more than four hours ago and had not been missed or thought of by anybody since then, now emerging from obscurity, stood in the morning-room doorway and looked round cautiously. Upstairs in the gallery and corridor all were talking freely and joyously. General Mallock still paced the wreck-strewn floor.

"Hush," he said presently. "What was that?"

"Hosh," said O'Kelly. "I heard nothing, sir."

"Listen!"

Then, floating to them from a distance, came the pleasant music of a trumpet.

"The soldiers!"

"Yes, that's the Hussars."

"Yes," said General Mallock, "that's a cavalry trumpet."

The voices of men and women mixed themselves in a chorus—"The soldiers. The Hussars . . . I heard the trumpet. . . . The soldiers. . . . I can hear the horses."

The men-servants had left their positions in an undisciplined manner; noisy, joyous, grinning, they came pouring down the stairs.

"Are you sure it's the soldiers?" Gilchrist stepped forward anxiously and apprehensively. "Oh, can we be sure? Yes, it must be them— Oh, they've come to our relief at last."

General Mallock looked at him contemptuously. "Mr. Gilchrist, I have not needed the assistance of further troops."

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"No, no, sir—a noble deed—a great deed, sir. Oh, how can I express my gratitude?"

"I hope," said the General very coldly, "that during the action you have done your duty—although not prominently;" and he turned his back.

Lord Keighley was the next to address him.

"General, will you allow me to thank you?"

"My good friends, all of you, it is *I* who have to offer thanks. . . . What shall I say to you—to all of you? One and all—I am satisfied with you. I am pleased with you. I am *proud* of you."

"We're proud of ourselves, sir;" and there was a jovial laugh. "But not so proud as we are of you, sir." The chorus of voices rose again. "You, sir. . . . You, sir. . . . Our General, sir."

"Good. But that's enough soft sawder, my lads. . . . Attention. . . . Right turn. . . . Dismiss. . . . As a favour to me, submit patiently to the surgeon's ministrations."

And General Mallock laid down his sword upon the hall table.

Dr. Bryant was already busy with the ugly stained bandages. "Let me see," he said cheerily, "what the damage amounts to."

"It's nothing," said Frederick.

"Mostly the glass," said Richards. "I don't believe one of us was hit with a bullet."

The soldiers were outside the devastated porch; horses and men filled all the moonlit drive; and General Mallock's butler, footman, and coachman were pulling aside the furniture and mattresses to allow the officers to enter the hall.

Major Grinling, stepping over the débris, smiled cordially and spoke respectfully.

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" May I ask who is in command here ? "

" I have that honour."

" Then, General," and Major Grinling saluted, " please accept my humble congratulations."

Lieutenant Cartwright followed smilingly, and saluted with ceremony.

" We are too late to see the fun, sir."

" You have done your work without us." Major Grinling looked about him admiringly. " And you haven't done things by halves."

" Sir," said Mr. Cartwright enthusiastically, " you have given them just what they were asking for—a jolly good lesson."

" A fine defence, sir—a *grand* defence, if I may take the liberty of saying so," and Major Grinling heartily offered his hand.

General Mallock shook hands limply, shyly, and clumsily.

" You must—ah—excuse my left hand, Grinling."

" Of course. . . . But what's this? You're wounded. . . . By God, you're badly wounded."

" Am I? Yes, ah—it does seem— But I had not noticed any pain—ah, till now," and he staggered, as if about to faint.

Keighley got his arms round him from behind, and supported him firmly; Kathleen rushed to his side, and clasped his uninjured hand; Bryant, dropping a bandage, came quickly to him.

" Ah, Bryant," and General Mallock had a friendly and contented smile for the doctor, " you resume your non-combatant duties. This is your business. My work is done."

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XXX

WHO can say what will catch the fancy of the public ? Sometimes it is a horrible and sordid murder ; sometimes it is a noble heart-stirring speech of a politician ; sometimes it is a matter of apparently small intrinsic importance—a yacht-race, a music-hall turn, a new and indelicate female costume. It may be merely a word, a song, a parlour game ; but in a moment the universe seems to go crazy about it, and while the brief fury lasts there is no chance that anything else will receive a fair share of popular attention.

Now it was the siege of the lonely house on the Yorkshire moors. General Mallock had become the hero of the hour, and the public could not hear too often or too much about their hero. So day after day the newspapers were retelling the tale of his famous exploit, and readers were rereading it with unabated avidity. Think of it—one brave man with a few faithful house-servants defying the onslaught of thousands of well-armed desperadoes, successfully repelling their frenzied rushes, beating them off again and again, for hour after hour holding his own against such terrific odds, and, unaided, winning a triumphant victory. It was all over, the battle had been won, the enemy were in full flight, when His Majesty's Hussars came galloping to the rescue of this lion-hearted English country gentleman, this father of valiant beautiful children, this chivalrous protector of the fugitive beneath his hospitable roof.

Picturesque newspaper writers, with only the same thing to say again, used more adjectives every time they said it.

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But the camera, handsomely supplementing the pen, filled the broad sheets with a daily album of pictures—snap-shots and time-exposures, one may readily imagine the profusion of black and white records : Soldiers relieving guard at the gates of Long Moor House ; Servant who took part in the defence standing on the gravel drive ; Dismantled outhouses from which tiles and slates were torn to use as missiles ; Remains of straw taken from stables, set on fire, and thrust in upon the defenders ; View of the hall from ruins of porch ; Some of the guns left on the field by a routed and flying enemy ; Two insets of the beautiful Miss Mallocks ;—and large full-page picture of Police keeping back the crowd to admit motor-car with London doctors.

In fact the house was suffering another and a friendly siege at the hands of the admiring public. With the pressmen and the photographers came hundreds of idle, curious, sympathetic sight-seers. They poured out of the trains at Bevistown station, clamoured at the bookstall for picture postcards, which of course had not yet been printed, hired every conceivable vehicle in the town, and came creaking and jolting up the moor road to stand at the white gates, to gaze at the battered stone-walls, to harass the guard of honour furnished by the Hussars and the Police,—to work their way round the meadows, break fence and trespass, and employ their private Kodaks at close range or pick up some stray brickbat to be carried home and treasured as a relic.

And what seemed so strange—scarce one of these gaping or trespassing excursionists gave a thought to that terrible army of strikers whose force and power had been and was still being so splendidly exaggerated in order to heighten the glory of their conqueror. Where

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were they? Panic fear seemed to have passed for ever from the streets of Bevistown; the shopmen spoke without a tremor of recent disturbances, as though such things would never, could never happen again; the soldiers rode unmolested up and down, far and near; the sunlight was shining on heather and ling; and nothing disturbed the peace of the purple ridges and green hollows, except the cry of birds and the chatter of the tourists.

It was as if the savage hordes had melted in the distant haze where the blue sky came down to meet the vague horizon. Their leaders, as was known, had purposely vanished; but the rank and file, the companies, regiments, and brigades—how could they disappear so completely and be so promptly forgotten?

They were hiding in their homes now perhaps, sleeping through long days behind the drawn blinds of all those cottages at the quarry villages that our correspondents did not trouble to visit, dolefully waiting for other and even more unwelcome visitors, only creeping out for a breath of air or a secret meeting when night fell. Perhaps now they listened again to the Reverend Donaldson, found no answer to the "I told you so" of long-suffering wives, wished that they had obeyed their union, or had pitched Mr. McGaher into the pit instead of Lord Keighley's expensive machinery. Perhaps they were sorry now that the strike-anger had drawn them so woefully far from regular working hours and the well-filled basket of mid-day dinner.

The London doctors—famous surgeon and equally eminent physician—had come and gone; their proclamation was posted at the white gates and published in every newspaper. The bullet has been successfully extracted, the injuries to the wrist are less serious than

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it was at first supposed ; but there is fever and considerable exhaustion. Nevertheless, on the whole, General Mallock is progressing as favourably as could be expected. The case is now left in the sole charge of E. F. Bryant, M.D.

And now our correspondents, seizing upon the General's illness as a new vein in a nearly emptied mine, work it steadily. "See picture on opposite page. The window of the room in which General Mallock lies hovering between life and death is marked thus, X."

That marked window proved a favourite picture ; from the Orkneys to St. Michael's Mount, from Connemara to Cromer, kind souls were looking at the X with saddened eyes, and heaving sympathetic sighs. Will the wounded hero survive ; or will the brave spirit, after hovering behind the X for a little while longer, be extinguished in eternal darkness ? This was the question that newspapers, keeping up the excitement, asked every morning at millions of breakfast tables.

One evening there was a dreadful telegram. "*General Mallock worse.*" And still another, later that night. "*General Mallock reported sinking.*" Next morning, however, the grievous anxiety of the public was shown to be at least premature. Inquiries have elicited the fact that there is no foundation for yesterday's sensational report. "General Mallock, although continuing in the same critical condition, was no worse at midnight."

Then may we not hope ? Oh, please let us hope that our wounded hero will recover.

Truly General Mallock was already out of danger. E. F. Bryant, M.D., the doctor in charge, was ready

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to stake his professional reputation that the patient would soon be himself again. Those were the words used by Bryant on more than one occasion; but in fact they did not adequately convey all his thought.

Each man has many selves—the self of to-day, the self of yesterday, his best self, his worst self. Would General Mallock, when himself again, be the darkened, brooding, dreaming self of the last few months; or would he be reinstated, mentally if not physically, as he was before the trouble of a life descended on him fifteen years ago? Bryant felt his hope for such a restoration grow stronger every day.

One whole day—the day after the London doctors' visit—Bryant spent at Long Moor House; and for the better part of it sat watching by the patient's bedside. It was the twentieth of March—the dreaded anniversary—the day that used to seem interminable—the day that used to bring with it the certainty of cerebral excitement.

It passed quietly and restfully away. At dawn the patient was feverish, light-headed now and then; he muttered and moaned between waking and sleeping; the pain of his wound throbbed intermittently. But by night-fall the temperature was lower, the pulse stronger, and the mind absolutely clear. When Bryant left the house late at night, his patient was sleeping as peacefully as a child.

Yet he had not been ignorant of the date. He knew and remembered all that had once happened on this date. Two or three times he spoke of it to his daughter.

"Kathleen—the twentieth of March!"

"Yes; 'father'."

"Remind O'Kelly—don't let him forget to clean my sword."

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That was in the morning. And in the evening Bryant heard him speak to Kathleen again.

"Has O'Kelly cleaned my sword?"

"Yes, father."

"Is it back in its place?"

"Yes."

"That's right, dear;" and he smiled.

He spoke naturally and quietly, just as if giving directions and making inquiries about any little matter of household routine. There was none of the old excitement—nothing abnormal or morbid.

And finally he slept. It was as if a disturbing ghost had been laid, a curse lifted, the poison of grief eliminated from a memory. The day had no terrors now for General Mallock.

After this Dr. Bryant used to come into the sick-room with almost boisterous cheerfulness, and each morning the patient responded more vigorously to his confident greeting.

"Well, Bryant, what news?"

"All good news, General. Nothing but good news for you."

"They haven't apprehended McGaher yet?"

"No. And I doubt if they ever will. The police traced him as far as Liverpool, but now they seem to think he has slipped through their fingers and got clean away."

"Where would he go?"

"To America most likely;" and Bryant laughed cheerfully. "He'll be an acquisition wherever he goes, won't he?"

Then the doctor made his professional examination and asked the usual questions; while the patient, propped up with pillows, and sitting high in the bed,

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looked at him with blue unclouded eyes and answered in a firm clear voice.

"Did you have a fairly comfortable night?"

"Quite comfortable."

"Did you sleep?"

"Well, I don't sleep long hours—but quite enough."

"Is your shoulder any easier?"

"Much easier."

"No twinges?"

"Really nothing to speak of."

"Excellent!" Dr. Bryant was plainly delighted with his patient's progress. "You couldn't be doing better. It's a wonderful weapon, that new rifle—makes such nice clean holes. . . . You'll be glad to hear that—so far as I can ascertain—every one of the wounded is doing well."

The blue eyes became slightly clouded, and General Mallock frowned.

"What was that? A twinge?"

"Oh, no. I was—ah—thinking of what you tell me. I can't comprehend it—So very difficult to comprehend the immunity from—ah—fatal consequences."

"Of course," said Bryant gaily, "they are lucky in having a good doctor. You know, I'm attending to a lot of them."

General Mallock still frowned, and he spoke musingly.

"Not one killed, yet so many put out of action. Astounding—almost incredible." Then his face brightened. "But, doctor—my dear fellow—are you deceiving me?"

"No—oh, no."

"Are you not—by chance—withholding the casualty list out of kindness to me—thinking that perhaps I—ah—should not be strong enough to bear it?"

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"No," said Bryant earnestly, "I give you my word of honour I'm not deceiving you. We have withheld nothing from you, except the mass of correspondence downstairs, and the laudatory notices in the papers—which we feared might be too exciting for you while you had a temperature."

"They are wonderfully flattering—these papers;" and the blue eyes glowed, and the uninjured hand lying on the counterpane shook a little. 'Kathleen has read me a few extracts—most gratifying. . . . But now tell me more about the wounded—since there are no killed to talk about."

It almost seemed that, kind as he was, General Mallock would have preferred to listen to a tale of slaughter. He showed a simple childlike pride in his famous victory; and perhaps the soldier's instinct suggested to him that its splendour might suffer diminution in historical records by reason of its poor death-roll.

"You say, Bryant, clean wounds—all of them?"

"Yes, sir—as far as I can make out."

"Enough to stop them—but not enough to kill them?"

"That's it, sir."

"Astonishing! I thought there must have been many slain. . . . But of course I'm very pleased—very pleased indeed."

Another morning, when he had again been speaking of the enemy, Bryant said something that, instead of evoking a frown, caused General Mallock to blow his nose and then to wipe his eyes.

"Whenever I go among them," said Bryant, "I hear—what do you think? . . . Your praise! You are popular even with them."

"No?"

"Yes, it's the fact, sir. They all speak kindly of

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you. They all want to know how you are getting on."

"That is—ah—really kind, Bryant. Quite touching;" and the General blew his nose.

"Donaldson was certainly right in what he told me long ago about the men. They don't bear malice. And I hope Donaldson is equally right in his views about the future."

"What are his views?"

"He hopes for a speedy settlement. They have not only forgiven you, General, they have forgiven Lord Keighley;" and Bryant laughed. "Perhaps they would forgive anybody, now that Mr. Gilchrist has bolted."

"Ah! That was a craven act on the part of Mr. Gilchrist. I was sorry to hear of it. But do you suppose he will never come back?"

"Not for untold gold. Lord Keighley himself wouldn't try to persuade him."

Keighley, during the ten days in which the General was still confined to his bed, had paid frequent calls of inquiry; and to this sympathetic inquirer Dr. Bryant had not scrupled to tell all his thoughts about the patient.

It was, he said, the most remarkable case that he had ever heard or read of. "And I never in the least understood it, Lord Keighley. As I can't praise my cleverness, I may as well be honest enough to confess the truth. I was fearful of the bursting of a nerve-storm, and I firmly believed that when it came his mental balance would be lost for ever. Well, the storm came—a more terrific one than I had guessed at; and it seems that in it his balance was regained."

"You mean that he is no longer mad?"

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"Yes. And I ask myself now if he ever was mad."

"Oh, I don't think there's much doubt of that. Remember how he went on—the things he said. 'My post—my troops—the Rebel Chieftain'!"

"He was speaking in the terms of his dream—he had been living in a dream. His words were mad; but, really, weren't his acts sane—when you look back at them?"

"They were successful, anyhow."

"I didn't understand him—Miss Kathleen said so, and she was right. I was too physical. I missed the psychological side of the case. And that perhaps really was the whole case. I felt sure there was no organic brain disease, but I didn't push the diagnosis to its ultimate conclusions. I was only right in one thing—I always said from the first it was imperatively necessary to rouse him. But I can take no credit for it—an instinctive guess that any old woman might have made after talking to him for five minutes."

"Well, he did rouse himself at last."

"Yes, but how? By obeying the dominant idea, instead of breaking free from it. Really it is very wonderful—the more one thinks of it. He was slowly sinking into insanity, a man fading out of existence—probably nothing short of the tremendous self-evolved stimulus could have saved him. . . . One is forced back to the old simile of a storm. Nothing like a crashing thunderstorm, to burst dark clouds, clear the oppressive air—and even blow away our cobwebs."

But after Keighley had been admitted to the sick-room and had paid his respects to the patient, he hinted to Dr. Bryant that perhaps all the cobwebs were not quite blown away.

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"What do you think of him?" asked Bryant confidently.

"He seems very pleased with himself," said Keighley.

"He'll be more so when he reads all that people have written about him."

"But, Bryant, it struck me that he still speaks rather queerly about things."

"Only the last echoes of the dream."

"I must say, he struck me as a bit dreamy still."

"Well, if so," said Bryant firmly, "what does that matter? It is a happy dream now—a *healthy* dream."

"And you think he'll be all right—and fairly jolly—to the end of his days?"

"Yes, I do.... Of course one ought perhaps to consider how long that will be;" and Bryant spoke gently and tenderly. "He is an old man; and although he is well-preserved for his age, there has been great wear and tear—a heavy strain, continued for fifteen years. One could perhaps scarcely expect such a life to last out to the extreme limit."

"Poor old chap!"

"But if I were you," said Bryant very gently, "I shouldn't worry about that,—or about his way of talking,—or even if at some future time he should return to dreamland. He is happy—that is the great thing. And when the end comes, he will pass from the lesser to the greater dream without reluctance and without fear."

XXXI

It was the afternoon of General Mallock's first day out of bed, and since luncheon he had been comfortably established in the morning-room.

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This room had suffered far less damage than the hall, and it looked bright and gay, with the kindly sunlight shining upon the innumerable bouquets, baskets, and wreaths of flowers that had arrived during the last fortnight. Many of these pretty offerings were shrivelled and faded already, but each day brought fresh supplies.

"Father, are you tired?"

"No, dear—only pleasantly."

The General was in the biggest armchair, a small table at his side, the sofa close to him should he wish to lie down; and Kathleen sat on a stool at his feet, with *The Times* spread open across her lap.

"Shall I read it again, father?"

"Yes, dear."

He wore the old grey suit, with his right arm carefully slung in a cradle under the empty sleeve; although he looked frail and shaky, his eyes were bright; he spoke firmly, and his whole manner was very simple and natural—expressing nothing but childlike pleasure and gratification.

"'The Government'"—Kathleen was reading the parliamentary report a second time—"may consider themselves fortunate—"

"Who is addressing the House now?"

"The Leader of the Opposition."

"Of course. Go on, dear."

"Very fortunate that in so serious a crisis the determined courage and unflinching firmness of one man averted all the consequences of their own hesitation, indecision, blindness. . . . Cries of Order."

"Yes. Order!" And General Mallock smiled.

Kathleen patted the uninjured hand; and went on reading. "'In his opinion General Mallock deserved

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the thanks not only of the executive, but of the nation at large. . . .

"Too much," and the General showed some emotion.
"Too much."

"No," said Kathleen proudly, "not one word too much. The Home Secretary admits it. . . . There can be no difference of opinion on either side of the House." . . . And the leading article says just the same. Father, all the *world* is saying it. . . . Hear it again."

"No, spare my blushes."

As Kathleen began to read the article, O'Kelly came into the room with a tray of letters. He paused near the door, and listened beamingly.

. . . "General Mallock, while covering himself with glory, has earned any reward that the State can offer." . . . What is it, O'Kelly?"

"Tis the post, miss. Dozens more letters—and a foine heap of parcels outside."

While Kathleen got up and took the letters, General Mallock was putting on his spectacles and murmuring to himself.

"I want no rewards. That is, except one—which would be too much to hope for."

"Might I," said O'Kelly, pointing to the newspaper, "take it out to the servants? I'd like to recite 'em that bit about the glory."

"Yes," said General Mallock, "by all means. But bring it back. Mr. Geoffrey will wish to see it."

"Oh, Mr. Geoffrey will be reading it in the train, sir."

"No, he probably would not buy *The Times*. This is *The Times*. . . . You can mention to the servants that *The Times* is the paper that carries most weight. It is the one read by foreigners—the one quoted all over the world."

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"Yes, sir. . . . Be George, here's more flowers for ye, sir."

Mollie had come in laden with cardboard boxes, and a fragrance of delicate hot-house blossoms accompanied her. One after another she brought these new trophies to her father.

"Yes, dear, more flowers! Wonderful. Put them down. I'll look at them later."

"Tributes from strangers, dad—nearly all of them."

"People are too kind to me. . . . The letters, Kathleen, the letters!"

Kathleen was opening the letters, and she laid them in a pile upon the little table at her father's left hand.

"Now, let me run through them. . . . 'I venture to recall myself to your memory.' Ah, yes. Very gratifying." And he picked up another letter. "'The congratulations of an old soldier.'" As he rapidly glanced at each letter, he murmured a few words of its contents. "'Your autograph' . . . 'Your photograph' . . . 'Thanking you in anticipation!'" Then he looked round, and spoke with an air of importance. "Has anyone thought of counting the total number of letters received during these two weeks?"

"No," said Kathleen, "but we will do so."

"They ought to be put in a large book—one large album. Later on I shall like to go through them more carefully. Years hence it will give me great pleasure to look at the album."

"Yes, father."

He had begun to read another letter, and presently he made an excited and joyful exclamation. "Why, this is from Sir Henry Standish! . . . He says—he says . . . 'The coldness of years!' . . . Pardon me

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for ever entertaining a doubt.' . . . Ah! . . . ' And remember me only as your subaltern at Agra.' . . . Yes, yes, Harry Standish joined me in 1884; " and General Mallock's emotion was plainly to be perceived. " Oh, I'm glad Harry has written to me. . . . Here's a postscript too." He read it aloud; and the words caused a break in his voice, and set him trembling. "' P.S. It won't be my fault if the injustice of the past is not now rectified.' . . . Oh, what does he mean? Oh—I wonder! . . . Kathleen, where are you?"

"Here I am, father."

General Mallock took off his spectacles and wiped the lenses.

"Kathleen, put this letter in my sword-case—not with the others—in my sword-case, by itself."

"Yes, father," and Kathleen carried Sir Henry's letter to the inner room, to deposit it in its place of honour without delay.

While she was doing so, Mollie brought her father a single flower and insisted on pinning it to the lapel of his coat.

"Dad, you really must wear this. It came all alone—one white rose—from an anonymous admirer."

"Very nice, I'm sure," and General Mallock put on his spectacles again.

"Dad—I rather think Mr. Cartwright is coming over this afternoon—to see you."

"To see me, Mollie?" And General Mallock had a whimsical smile, and lifted his eyebrows incredulously. "How attractive I'm becoming! Admirers far and near. But truly, my dear, I didn't know that Mr. Cartwright was one of them."

"He is, dad—an ardent admirer."

"And of no one else?" General Mallock was

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still smiling. "Mollie, I'm not jealous. I don't mind."

"Oh, father, don't you really mind?" And she put her arms round his neck, and kissed him effusively. "We—we are almost engaged to each other."

"Nonsense—nonsense. You're too young—both of you. But send him to me when you're two years older, and then—well, I'll think about it."

"Two years! Oh, dad—you couldn't be so cruel."

"We'll see. Now let me finish my correspondence."

But before the General reached the end of this agreeable task, Dr. Bryant was announced.

"None the worse for being up and about, sir?"

"No, not a bit, Bryant."

"But we mustn't overdo it," said Bryant cheerfully. "I would suggest, Miss Kathleen, that it might be as well for your father to rest a little on this nice couch."

The General, meekly submitting to his doctor's directions, transferred himself to the sofa.

"Now let us see what sort of a pulse you have got," and Bryant took out his watch.

"Lieutenant Cartwright," said O'Kelly at the door, announcing another visitor.

General Mallock turned to greet the visitor, and at sight of him laughed gaily.

"What, good gracious, Mr. Cartwright—you don't mean to say that *you've* brought me a bouquet too?"

"From Mrs. Grinling, sir—with many kind inquiries."

"How kind—how very kind! Take them from him, Mollie. How are you, my dear fellow? Excuse my left hand."

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Young Mr. Cartwright shook hands with tender care. He spoke in the moderated voice proper to a sick-room, and his manner towards the General was full of deference, of veneration. No one now could say that he seemed to forget or ignore the difference of rank between them.

"And I am charged with messages from Major Grinling. Grinling hoped to come, sir—but he is so busy. For one thing, we are hourly expecting orders to return to York."

"So soon?"

"Yes;" and Mr. Cartwright permitted himself a faint chuckle. "You have pacified the district, sir. Since you took up the matter, not a stone at us—not so much as a marble thrown by a child!"

"And no mud?" asked Mollie.

"Not a speck." He smiled at Mollie. Then, as he addressed the General again, his face became sedate and dignified, and there was a certain meaning solemnity in his tone. "Grinling, sir, is in communication with the War Office about our affairs and other affairs; and he rather expected another kind of message—not about us at all, but about—" Then he paused.

General Mallock was looking at the new bouquet of flowers, and not listening.

"Yes," said Kathleen, "please tell father later. Dr. Bryant was just going to take his pulse."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I didn't see." And Mr. Cartwright modestly backed away towards the door, through which Mollie kindly escorted him.

"Now then," said Bryant, sitting down by the sofa. "we'll ascertain if this pulse is any stronger."

"My dear fellow, I feel stronger every day. . . . But who is that out there? Geoffrey? Or more visitors?"

A sound of voices had come from the hall. Mollie

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and Mr. Cartwright were talking to people in the porch.

" You won't see anybody else ? " asked Kathleen.

" Why not, my dear ? "

" Won't it tire him, Dr. Bryant ? "

Then O'Kelly made his characteristic announcement.

" 'Tis Lord Keighley. And Mr. Donaldson."

Keighley approached the sofa with respectful solicitude, and paid his respects to the invalid in an appropriate sick-room voice ; but little Donaldson bustled joyously, and seemed disposed to indulge in an exuberant enthusiasm that might soon become noisy and distressing.

" Great news ! " cried Mr. Donaldson. " We bring you great news, sir."

General Mallock had a startled expression, and he looked at the little man eagerly and expectantly.

" From London ? "

" No, sir, from the quarries."

" Oh, the quarries ! " General Mallock's animated aspect changed, and he spoke dully. " Oh, ah, yes—to be sure—the quarries.

" His lordship and I have had a rare tussle," and Mr. Donaldson laughed, and rubbed his hands together. " Oh, a rare tussle. But we have been able, by a leetle—"

Keighley shrugged his shoulders, and turned to General Mallock.

" We needn't worry you with particulars, sir. The strike is at an end."

" Work begins to-morrow," said Donaldson noisily, " to-morrow, sir."

" Oh," said Kathleen, " I am so glad," and she smiled at the quarry owner very cordially.

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"His lordship," said Donaldson, "has made large concessions."

"So have the men," said his lordship stolidly.

"But it was what I foretold from the first. All my words have come true. The s'lution of the problem was easy as soon as Mr. Gilchrist had gone."

"Yes," said his lordship, "when Mr. McGaher had gone too."

"So now I say"—and Donaldson said it with the utmost enthusiasm—"Drop these useless prosecutions. Amnesty to all concerned! It'll be the best policy in the long run."

"Ah," said General Mallock politely, but without much interest. "You are referring to the civil power now."

"General, use your influence;" and Mr. Donaldson dropped his voice, and spoke gently and wheedlingly. "The authorities musn't be vindictive. Oh, I've talked to the men—I've blown them up finely. They didn't dare to look me in the face. But what are they really? Children—just little children—in their hearts."

"Mr. Donaldson," said Kathleen, "I think that perhaps father may—"

But Mr. Donaldson was not easily to be interrupted. "I told them," he continued; "that you, sir, had saved them from committing a great crime. The tears rolled down their rough faces. They don't blame you. They bear no malice."

General Mallock frowned thoughtfully and raised his left hand to his forehead.

"Mr. Donaldson, the fact is—they got off lightly. So many hit—comparatively speaking, an immense number hit, and not one killed. It seems almost miraculous."

"Suppose," said Donaldson earnestly, "it was quite

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miraculous! Providence making you an instrument, and controlling your use! That's a grand thought, sir. It should be a *comforting* thought to one well on in years, whose time on—”

Kathleen interrupted firmly and effectually.

“Mr. Donaldson, it is kind of you to have called. But my father is not yet strong enough for long conversations. And—”

“He must not be fatigued. Just so. Just so.” Mr. Donaldson beamed at the General and at everybody else. “I intrude. I trespass on your hospitable courtesy—but, as you are good enough to say, only in kindness.” And he bowed himself to the door. “Best wishes for this house.” Then he came back, and offered his hand to Keighley. “My lord—peace—unbroken peace.”

“I hope so,” said Keighley, shaking hands. “We'll all hope so;” and he carefully closed the door behind Mr. Donaldson.

Bryant had brought out his watch again; but the patient waved him aside, and got up from the sofa.

“Don't trouble, my dear fellow. I'm all right—the pulse could tell you nothing that we do not know. . . . But I must go into my room now. . . . Kathleen, I would like to write to Harry Standish—at once.”

“Oh, father, won't you rest now? Dr. Bryant—don't you think?”

“No, no, give me your arm, Bryant. Kathleen, I'll dictate it to you. Keighley, excuse me. . . . Let Lord Keighley have *The Times*. ”

General Mallock had struggled to his feet, and the doctor assisted him as he moved towards the inner room. Evidently Bryant was of opinion that the patient must be a competent judge as to whether he

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felt tired or not, and that it would be injudicious to thwart his active impulses.

"Kathleen—one word!" Keighley whispered to her as she followed her father to the other room.

"Yes?"

"Come here—only for a moment. . . . Does the General know about us?"

"No," whispered Kathleen, smiling rather sadly, "but I think he suspects."

"Ah—I'm very glad if he does."

The smile still flickered on Kathleen's lips, but its sadness changed to pleasure and defiance. "You are not ashamed of my family now?"

"No, I'm proud of your family. I consider it as my own family. When is it to be really all one family?"

"Oh, not for a long time—perhaps a very long time."

"I don't mean to wait indefinitely."

"You must wait till I say yes. I haven't said it yet."

"Kathleen—one moment." Lord Keighley laughed softly. "It would be highly indecorous to marry anybody else. Remember, I've spent an evening with you *en déshabille*. I've seen you with your hair down—and a blackened face——"

"Yes, father, here I am."

Her father had called to her, and she hurried into the other room.

Before General Mallock had finished dictating his letter there was a commotion in the hall—rapturous cries from Mollie, O'Kelly's voice upraised, Frederick running from the servants' offices to swell the welcoming chorus.

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"Geoffrey ! It's Geoffrey."

"Tis himself. 'Tis Mr. Geoffrey."

Geoffrey, hastening home for his holidays, had travelled by an earlier train than usual, and he arrived in a Bevistown fly before the dogcart had started to meet him.

"How's the Governor ? Where is he ? "

"This way, Geoff. Come quick—he's longing to see you."

Mollie, hanging on her brother's arm, led him to the General's room, and Dr. Bryant came out smiling, and left the family together. For a few minutes the visitors were entirely forgotten.

Lord Keighley laughed good-naturedly, and looked at Bryant. "Miss Kathleen said I might stay to tea ; but I think, don't you know——"

"Yes," said Bryant, "she was good enough to ask me to tea also, but I think one would be in the way."

"Pity to interfere with these pleasant transports. I'll get hold of Cartwright, and give him a hint that we'd better all clear off. Where has he got to ? "

Mr. Cartwright was outside the ruined porch, talking to a Hussar orderly who had ridden up the drive immediately after the arrival of Geoffrey's fly. The trooper, unfastening the pouch on his cross-belt, gave Mr. Cartwright a letter from Major Grinling.

"Bravo," said Mr. Cartwright excitedly, when he had read Major Grinling's brief scrawl and glanced at another paper enclosed in the same envelope. "Bravo, and three cheers for Camberley."

"News, sir ?" asked O'Kelly inquisitively. "Good news ? "

The visitors did not hurry away. They waited to see the General again. He came out of the inner room

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presently, leaning on his son's arm, with Kathleen and Mollie fondly attending him—a united and happy family group.

" My boy has come home—my dear boy is back once more."

Bryant pushed forward the big armchair, and General Mallock sat in it, with Geoffrey on a smaller chair at his side. Mollie and Kathleen were behind the big chair, looking down at their brother.

" General," said Keighley, " before we bid you good-night, Mr. Cartwright has a message that he wishes to deliver."

" Mr. Cartwright," said Bryant, " has news for you—news from London."

Cartwright had advanced a few steps. He stood in front of the General, very square and erect, and his manner was solemn and dignified.

" This, sir, is a telegram that Major Grinling has just received—from the War Office."

" Indeed ? "

General Mallock was watching Cartwright's face. He flushed suddenly; his eyes glittered, and he began to tremble.

" Yes, sir, from the War Office—from Lord Camberley. Grinling was expecting something of the sort;" and Cartwright paused. " May I read it, sir ? "

The General made a shaky gesture with his left hand, but did not speak.

Then Lieutenant Cartwright, with his heels well together, and standing still more erect, read the telegram in a strong firm voice.

" ' Mallock restored to Army List. Will be in tomorrow's *Gazette*. '

There was a silence—broken by O'Kelly, who had listened at the door.

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"Thin Oi say bravo too. Hurrah! *That's* something like a reward;" and he dashed into the hall to spread the glorious news.

The telegram was in General Mallock's hand now, shaking and rustling as he stared at it through his tears. "Yes," he murmured, "yes—yes, *that's* the only reward worth having."

The visitors had all turned away. Keighley strolled to the window, and looked out at the garden. Cartwright moved to the hearth, and looked at the basket grate. Bryant glided in the direction of the door.

There was a sound of a suppressed sob; and then General Mallock spoke loudly and proudly.

"Kathleen, bring me my sword-case."

"Yes, father."

Kathleen fetched the sword-case from the other room, laid it on the table near her father's chair, and was about to open it.

"No," said the General, "let Geoffrey open it. . . Open it, Geoffrey. . . Take out that placard. . . Tear it from the hilt. . . Now tear it to pieces."

Geoffrey tore up the old label, and let the fragments fall. Then he took the sword from the case, and silently offered it to his father.

"Thank you, Geoff. . . The King has deigned to claim its use again;" and General Mallock laid the sword across his knees, and took his son's hand.

Both his daughters were sobbing noisily. Bryant, gliding through the open door, glanced back at the little family party. Kathleen had gone to Keighley in the window, and my lord boldly put his arm round her waist. Mollie had gone to the fireplace to sob there, and Mr. Cartwright was sympathetically patting her on the back.

GENERAL MALLOCK'S SHADOW

presently, leaning on his son's arm, with Kathleen and Mollie fondly attending him—a united and happy family group.

"My boy has come home—my dear boy is back once more."

Bryant pushed forward the big armchair, and General Mallock sat in it, with Geoffrey on a smaller chair at his side. Mollie and Kathleen were behind the big chair, looking down at their brother.

"General," said Keighley, "before we bid you good-night, Mr. Cartwright has a message that he wishes to deliver."

"Mr. Cartwright," said Bryant, "has news for you—news from London."

Cartwright had advanced a few steps. He stood in front of the General, very square and erect, and his manner was solemn and dignified.

"This, sir, is a telegram that Major Grinling has just received—from the War Office."

"Indeed?"

General Mallock was watching Cartwright's face. He flushed suddenly; his eyes glittered, and he began to tremble.

"Yes, sir, from the War Office—from Lord Camberley. Grinling was expecting something of the sort;" and Cartwright paused. "May I read it, sir?"

The General made a shaky gesture with his left hand, but did not speak.

Then Lieutenant Cartwright, with his heels well together, and standing still more erect, read the telegram in a strong firm voice.

"'Mallock restored to Army List. Will be in tomorrow's *Gazette*.'"

There was a silence—broken by O'Kelly, who had listened at the door.